



The Nami Cookbook

Chop
IT LIKE IT'S
Flat!

Welcome!

Hej! Welcome to The Nanami Cookbook: Chop It Like It's Hot, we're so pleased to have you!

Tonight, you'll be dining with 9 incredible dishes, and to tide you over between, there will be 28 gorgeous illustrations as well as 7 tantalizing fics. We hope your experience is as luxurious as a beach vacation to Malaysia. If you'd like to pay compliments to the chefs, the masters behind the creations in this book will be listed at the end, and we encourage you to reach out and let them know!

For now, vær så god!

Love, The Nanami Cookbook Mod Team



Contents

Art by Kari	4	Recipe by Snig.....	40
Recipe by Metallic_Sweet	6	“Garden Focaccia”	
“Cursed Spirit Wellington”		Art by Adler_Eri	41
Art by Meru90	7	Fic by OnceABlueMoon.....	42
Art by YooksTea	8	“Ratio”	
Fic by Arayne.....	9	Art by Raine	45
“Survival Instinct”		Recipe by Sasu	46
Art by kidkyan	13	“Nonstandard Champagne Fondue”	
Recipe by LovingThatRain	14	Art by oretsuu.....	47
“Albóndigas Surprise for Itadori”		Art by berg.....	48
Art by Miyo	15	Fic by MagnusTesla	49
Art by Mirandarv17.....	16	“Ragtag Family”	
Fic by bisho_curious.....	17	Recipe by thechaoscriptid.....	52
“Nanami’s Terrible Day Off”		“Roast Curse Beast”	
Art by Kejiyaa	23	Art by yulicechan.....	53
Recipe by Ken.....	24	Art by colourovf	54
“Nanami’s Mulled Wine Stew”		Fic by shara	55
Art by Frappes.....	25	“Sift Through These Cinders”	
Art by abusedmember.....	26	Art by kultaki	59
Recipe by Cate	27	Recipe by Vic.....	60
“Menchi Katsu on Mashed Potato with Pea & Carrot Gravy”		“Grilled Octopus with Lemon- Potatoes and Sesame Grissini ”	
Fic by Vero.....	28	Art by Joh!	61
“Grocery Shopping”		Art by Cranity.....	62
Recipe by Eline	32	Art by Mai	64
“Cassecroute Babka”		Art by Millydeng	66
Art by teenytraveler.....	33	Art by Coop	68
Art by mihaellustrates	34	Art by GRIMM	70
Fic by iwaoiks.....	35	Art by teianjin	72
“your hands stretch outwards; my hands stretch towards you”		Art by nicahls.....	74
Art by nicobellart.....	39	Art by petridumps.....	76



Cursed Spirit Wellington

Recipe by Metallic_Sweet

Serves 5-6 people

Time Required: 2 hours

(4.5 hours with rough puff)

Ingredients

2lb/910g salmon fillet,
deboned and deskinne
8oz/227g cream cheese or fresh soft
goat cheese, room temperature
2 tsp/14g dried onion flakes
1 tsp/7g dill, dried
1 tsp/7g thyme, dried
1 tsp/5ml lemon juice
1 tsp/7g salt, ground
½ tsp/4g white pepper, ground
¼ tsp/2g spicy paste,
such as gochujang (optional)
1lb/454g puff pastry, defrosted
or 1 batch rough puff recipe
1 large egg, beaten
Sea salt, to sprinkle (optional)

Rough Puff Ingredients

250g all purpose flour
1tsp/7g salt, finely ground
250g unsalted butter,
cold and cut in small cubes
Cold water

Special Equipment

1 baking sheet 18"x13"/45.72x33.02 cm
Clingfilm/plastic wrap
Baking parchment
Pastry brush

Rough Puff Directions

- 1) Mix together the flour and salt in a large bowl.
- 2) Cut the cold butter into the flour with a pastry cutter or by rubbing in with your fingertips until the mixture resembles fine crumbs.
- 3) Mix about 1 tablespoon/15ml of cold water at a time into the flour and butter until the dough can be pressed into a ball. Transfer to a lightly floured surface.
- 4) Shape the dough into a rectangle, 3 times wider than it is tall. Fold into thirds. Wrap in clingfilm and let rest in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.
- 5) Roll out the rested dough into a rectangle the same size as before. Repeat the folding and resting process 3 more times (4 times total).
- 6) Let the dough rest in the refrigerator until ready to use.

Cursed Spirit Wellington Directions

- 1) Lay out a generous amount of clingfilm on a clean, flat surface. Cut the salmon fillet into two equally sized rectangles. Lay flat with the thinner sides of the fillets overlapping on the clingfilm.
- 2) Mix together the cream cheese, onion flakes, dill, thyme, lemon juice, salt, and white pepper. Spread the mixture in an even layer over the salmon, leaving 1-inch/2.5cm space at the edges.
 - Optional: to create a "cursed" portion, apply the spicy paste to a small area of your choice while spreading the cheese mixture on the salmon.
- 3) Using the clingfilm, roll the salmon fillets up into a tight log after removing clingfilm. Refrigerate wrapped salmon log until firm.
- 4) Roll out the puff pastry on a lightly floured surface to a square about 1cm thick. Unwrap the chilled salmon log and place in the middle of the square. Egg-wash the 2 inch/5cm border generously before folding the left side over the salmon log, followed by the right. Cut excess pastry from the top and bottom if necessary and fold over at the seam-side. Sprinkle with sea salt, if desired. Chill salmon wellington back in the refrigerator for 20 minutes.
- 5) Preheat the oven to 200C/400F. Line a baking sheet with parchment. Place the wellington on sheet and score with a sharp knife. Brush liberally with egg-wash.
- 6) Bake for 45-50 minutes or until the pastry is golden brown. Remove from oven and let rest on the baking sheet for at least 10 minutes. To serve, transfer to a serving platter and cut in 1-inch/2.5cm slices.





Survival Instinct

By Arayne

In.

Out.

Two seconds but the pain is sharp and furious in his chest. He swings his weapon down and then there is silence.

Blood spiders through the fabric of his suit, a morbid water painting that weaves seamlessly into the fabric. Kento presses hard against the exit wound and it runs over his fingers until his nail beds run red. "Fuck." It's a shallow cut, more dramatic than lethal, but Kento is exhausted and cleaning it will take time. Fortunate then, that the curse ran him into the ground past regular hours, and a boom in his cursed energy took care of the rest.

The sun has come up. It is no longer late enough to slink away in shadowed corners and be left alone. The streets are alight with people and there are concerned eyes trailing after him with every step he takes, feigning sympathy for a man they barely know. Their concern feels impossibly sticky, worse than the blood making a mess of his suit, worse than the sweat damp against his neck.

Perfunctory.

"Excuse me sir, do you need—?"

"Mind your own business." He snaps and immediately feels bad about it, worse as the woman tinges red and hurries away without him offering an apology.

The rest of the crowd eyes him warily and if anyone had dared to extend a hand, that desire has been well and truly snuffed out. Good Samaritans do not get rewarded in this world.

Focus.

But it is hard to focus. It's almost as though it were a game, cat and mouse, life or death, two sides of a coin Kento is desperate to flip into his favour because by the end of the day his desire to live is stronger than his desire for guilt. For absolution. It is the sunken feeling of knowing none of this has an easy ending and at the end of a particularly hard day, all he wants is to be left alone.

Flip a coin.

As he turns to face the street, Kento knows he is about a hundred paces away from his apartment, and feels the exhaustion settle into his bones. The adrenaline that has kept him on his feet thus far, electricity humming through his body, is slowly starting to fade into a trickle. His feet come slower now.

Again, he says, with fervour: "Fuck."

Then there is the ache. It stands apart from the pain in his chest and instead it lingers, ever-present and begging for his attention. Kento chooses to ignore it. It is ignored on the last stretch home, when he kicks his shoes off inside his apartment, or drags himself across the threshold of his bathroom. Once the smell of antiseptic has subsided and several bandages run criss-cross over his body, does he finally recognise the ache for what it is.

He's starving.

Isn't that the stupidest thing? His body doesn't even hurt. Before the pain even has time to register, now that the adrenaline has finally died down in the comfort of safety, the ache has turned into a storm; whining and begging Kento to do *anything* to settle it.

"Ugh." He sighs, bone-tired and so *annoyed*. Isn't self-preservation the number one rule as a sorcerer? Shouldn't he be more concerned with the cuts and scrapes, the way his body has bruised like an overripe peach, how exhaustion has seeped into every line around his

eyes; the way his limbs should *beg* for release but don't.

His stomach groans.

It seems as though, now that his body realises it is no longer in imminent danger, it gets to snag onto the first thing that is meant to keep Kento alive.

Between sleep and food, primary need pit against primary need, it is easy for him to choose. It seems logical: he can do without sleep, he cannot work without food. It doesn't mean he likes it. Kento does not *like* the gnawing pit in his stomach, the black hole intent on swallowing him whole, the *desperation* that ripples beneath his skin and demands to be compensated.

He is far beyond those days now.

But his relationship with food remains complex.

• • • • •

When Kento was eight years old, it was the first time he'd encountered a curse. It was large and terrifying at his grandmother's house, a few years after his grandfather had committed suicide, leaving her all alone. Of course, he hadn't known it was a suicide until he encountered a creature with eyes that mirrored his and a cry that pinched at his lungs. Curses, after all, are borne of regrets.

Growing up was less of an excitement and more of a terrifying unknown after that.

Food became the first obstacle. Through some miracle, he'd survived the ordeal and cursed energy, though he hadn't a name for it, required half of the term. He needed food, needed *energy*, in order to be able to sustain it. In order to protect what was important to him, Kento simply needed more food.

But food for a family as large as his was scarce. Food became synonymous with *guilt*.

Puberty wasn't kind to him: a changing body in more ways than one and every growth hurt more than the last, demanding more out of him. So when Kento turned fourteen, his technique a shaky little thing that balanced on the tightrope between pleasing his family and doing right by this world, his mother had told him their family of six no longer had the space to accommodate him. They were a working class family after all. There hadn't been enough food and Kento suspected that his budding techniques, his caprice and his quirks, may have been the excuse they needed.

He'd mourned it.

He'd hated it.

His relationship with food grew more complicated, more apathetic. It seemed tied to his relationship with his family, conditional upon his degree of uniformity.

But he'd also been relieved. To be blessed with a technique had meant less strain on his family, a problem for Jujutsu High to deal with and perhaps find acceptance that he hadn't been able to find at home.

But Jujutsu High had its own different set of problems.

In a school big enough to serve a hundred, only a handful of them remained, the rest of its grandiose space occupied by ghosts and lofty promises. Jujutsu sorcerers, it seemed, were limited edition. They took up space in a world that seemed ready to shove them out, the way Kento's family had. It felt eerie, as though he wasn't meant to be there until he too lay dead.

The silence did not deter the others, *they* seemed to have no problem grabbing whatever they'd needed. But Kento's relationship with food remained largely unchanged. Finally, there had been enough for him, food to accommodate a growing body and a desperate need for energy to suit the negative space inside of it.

With that came the disgust.

There was Gojou Satoru. The name had meant nothing to him; a countryside kid who hadn't been able to separate a curse from bad luck until he'd run straight into a living corpse and knew that to shamans bad luck and curses went hand in hand.

Gojou was a kid with a *name* that meant something. He didn't know what Kento knew: the writhing snake caught beneath your skin, squeezing your insides for every last drop. He didn't know what it meant to have your mother look at you and *consider* what you were worth that day in favour of your sisters. Gojou was a kid who turned up his nose at dishes, wasted it on petty fights until it smeared along

the wall. Although he was punished, never enough; not ever, it disgusted Kento to watch him squander food.

Still, he didn't eat. Not the way that he should, not the way a kid on the cusp of fifteen should eat.

It made him secretive. He'd push it around on his plate until the hunger grew so large a beast that felt impossible to ignore, the way it gnawed at his insides like a curse would until slowly, slowly, he would be forced to accept defeat. In every meal he saw what his parents could not afford. It felt like punishment to take it.

Just take it.

.....

Kento wonders when his need to eat outgrew what he was provided with, when his hunger became a curse that demanded more and more. He frequently remembers being hungry.

It's a bad habit that's persisted way into adulthood.

He manages to drag himself to the kitchen when he becomes aware of a faint ringing in his ears. It grows louder, more persistent like a kettle boiling over until it finally registers.

"Nanamiiiiiiiiin~!"

The voice gives him pause. He wouldn't—

But the key in his lock turns as Kento stands in the hallway and watches it happen, too stupefied to do anything. The door is pushed open and Kento comes face to face with Gojou.

"That key is given for emergencies."

It is meant to sound stern but the growl of his stomach breaks through the tenor of his voice and Kento's face flushes crimson. This is embarrassing. It isn't the first time that Gojou has broken into his home, but this is the first time Kento has become hyper aware of his body; how his abdominal muscles tighten and his shoulders hunch in an effort to hide it away from him.

In vain.

"Seems like an emergency to me!" Gojou says, cheerfully patting Kento's stomach and sidestepping him to avoid being hit for the effort. "I knew you were taking care of that Special Grade today."

"And?" Kento barely manages to hold back the bite. "That's not a first."

Gojou does not heed him. He simply wanders straight through the archway of Nanami's kitchen and makes himself a home there. He is the only person after so many years who has managed to forcefully insert himself into Nanami's life.

It's up for discussion whether that is deserving of praise.

"And I know that big scary Nanami doesn't like to take care of himself."

"I'm not a child, Gojou."

"Yet you really haven't changed from when you were."

A scathing reply is on his tongue but the words die out on his tongue when he catches a whiff of the contents of Gojou's bag. It is no wonder his stomach reacted to him; the table hosts a variety of foods that Kento would feel too uncomfortable buying himself.

Gojou has ransacked his kitchen for plates in the small time it took Kento to catch up to him. Olives, richly marinated with a hint of lemon and garlic, various kinds of bread, tapenade and dippings.

It's an apologetic offering. The kind that tells Kento Gojou wants something from him and is plying him with food to melt away some of his resistance.

"This is ridiculous."

It's embarrassing how much he wants it.

Gojou only pulls out a chair and plops down as though he belongs here. "Can you at least eat some of them?" He has never been the patient sort, rocking back and forth on a chair, nervous energy humming through him. At least he has the grace to wait until Kento tries one first.

What surprises him is that these are all items Kento enjoys privately, they're savoury and zesty, a perfect opposite to Gojou's sweet tooth.

Gojou knows nothing of his personal life and yet here's a table full of his favourites.

His eyes narrow.

"Are you stalking me?"

"I would if you were actually interesting." Gojou says. "Rest assured, you're the most boring man I've ever met. Your routine would make a nun weep."

The smell meets him when he sits down. His stomach clenches, he wants to eat them; he does.

"You look like shit." Gojou's gaze sweeps over him; the messy bandages and the stink of old iron.

When Gojou tries to lean in, fuss over a bandage, Nanami swats at him, distracted. "I'm fine."

"Sure." Gojou's voice is measured. "But I still wanted to treat you."

Nanami frowns. These are expensive, it feels excessive as breakfast food. He's used to his routines; the chocolate croissant in the morning, the cornflakes, his glass of milk. He's nothing if not a man of principles.

"This isn't appropriate."

Gojou might be right, even a nun would weep at the monotony of his life.

"Can you stop thinking so much, my man?" Gojou kisses his teeth. "I bought them because I wanted them, so you don't have to angst whether you can justify its purchase. I wanted you to eat them."

"Why olives?" He asks in a deadpan.

"Why not? You seem like a wine-and-dine kinda guy."

"The wine is missing."

"It is only 9am."

Goko makes a grab for the bread and Nanami stops him with only a stern look. "At least get a bread knife, you're not a savage."

Gojou grins. "Fine."

Nanami looks at the olives, feels Gojou's eager eyes on him, and pops one into his mouth. Fuck, it's good. Olives have been a rare occasion, only swapping them at boring corporate parties that lasted until the late hours at night, when your suit was at risk of being ruined by the oil. He has always loved these, but never felt like he could justify buying these for himself.

"Good, right?"

"Shut up."

It's more good-natured than he'd meant it. Gojou immediately starts cutting up the bread and, without asking, grabs four olives at once and immediately ruins his uniform.

"Ah, shit."

Nanami snorts. "You're still the same child you always were."

"That's so rude? Nanamin what the hell?" Gojou whines as he tries to grab a cloth and dabs uselessly at the ever-spreading stain. His mouth is still full and Nanami looks away from it in vague disgust. "Don't stare at me, help me!"

As he helps Gojou rub dish soap into the stain, ignoring his whining at how the fabric sticks to his skin, he remains amazed by Gojou's lack of inhibitions. It does remind him exactly of the sixteen-year-old who turned his nose up for foods he did not like.

The disparity between their upbringing is clear. But whereas Gojou has learned to appreciate non-savoury foods for his sake, perhaps Nanami can stand to learn from him. Maybe he has been missing out.

Difficult as it may be to admit, there is merit to Gojou's selfishness: the hunger in his stomach stills, satisfied at being offered more than it needs, a craving that can finally go fulfilled.

Until Gojou dumps two olives in Kento's lap and grins sheepishly. "Oops."

Wasteful or not, this was an expensive suit.

"Get out."

"Nanamin, it's covered in blood anyway! We can just try the dish soap!"

"Out."

Some things don't change, after all.





Albóndigas Surprise for Itadori

Recipe by LovingThatRain

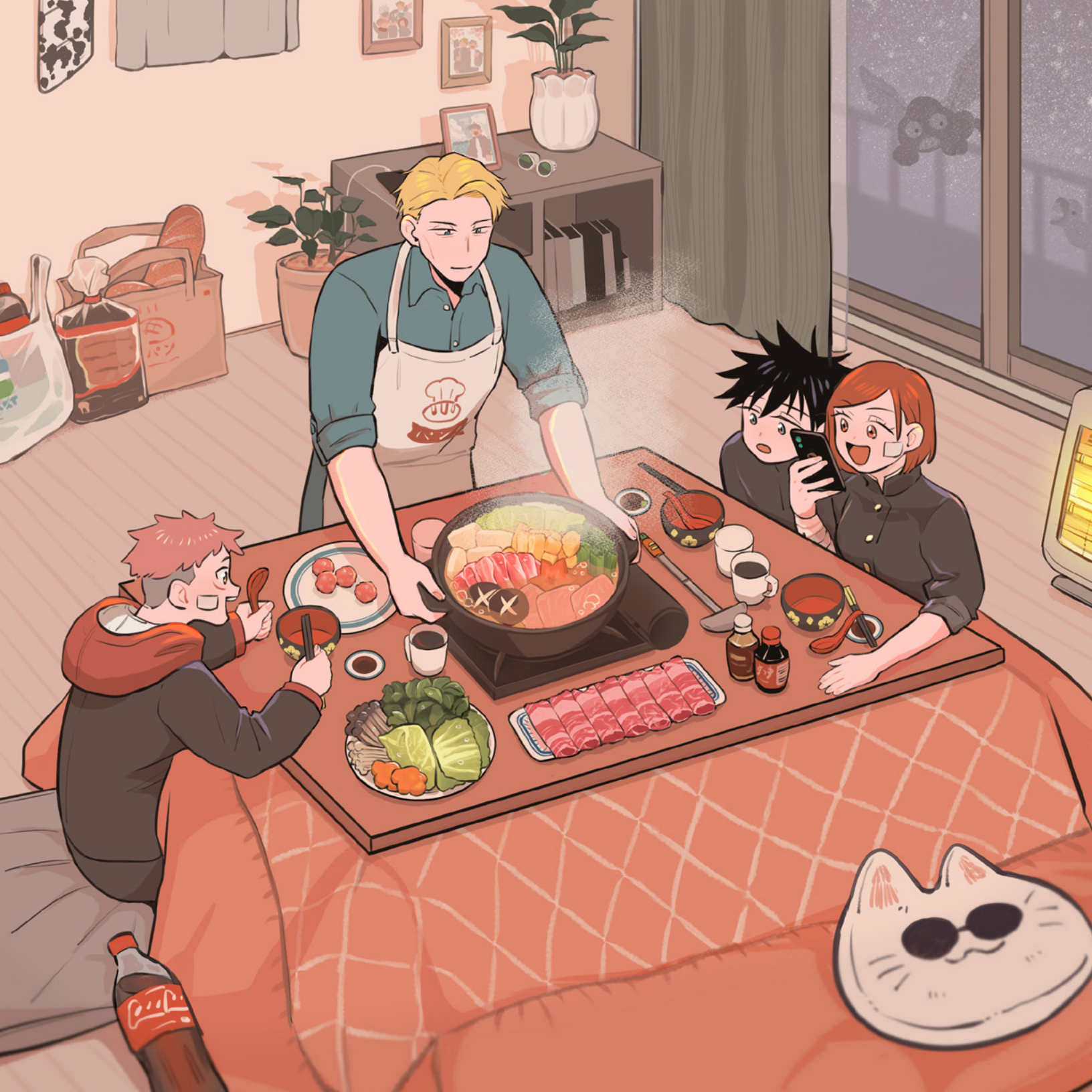
Serves ~8 people
Prep Time: 15 min
Total Time: 60 min

Ingredients

4 medium carrots
 5-6 Golden potatoes
 1 tomato
 2 zucchinis
 1/4 of an onion
 1 Serrano pepper
 ~1/2 cup (~20 g) cilantro [substitute with parsley or avoid adding it all together if you do not like cilantro]
 2 sprigs of mint
 1 clove of garlic
 1 Tbsp (~13 g) oil
 1 Bay leaf
 1 tsp (~4 g) garlic salt
 2 14.5 oz cans (~428 ml ea. Can) chicken broth
 3-4 14.5 oz cans (~428 ml ea. Can) water
 1.67 lb (~757 g) ground chicken
 5 Tbsp (~40 g) bread crumbs
 2 Tbsp (~24 g) chicken bouillon
 3 Tbsp (~39 g) uncooked long grain rice
 Ground pepper (to taste)
 1 egg

Directions

- 1) Prepping Vegetables:
 - Wash carrots, potatoes, tomato, serrano pepper, zucchini and cilantro.
 - Peel both the carrots and potatoes. Chop the ends off the zucchini.
 - Cut off the ends of the carrots and diagonally cut them into 2 inch (6 cm) thick pieces.
 - Cut tomatoes, zucchini, and potatoes in half. Cut each half into eight equal slices, about 1 inch (3 cm) thick.
 - Thinly slice the onion. Mince the garlic. Mince and set aside the mint for the meatballs. Cut the ends off the cilantro and chop it, setting it aside as a garnish. Carefully cut a slit into the serrano pepper.
- 2) In a large pot, heat the oil on medium heat. Add the onion slices, the bay leaf, and the serrano pepper and saute until the onions begin to look translucent. Once the onions are ready, add the minced garlic, carrots, potatoes, and tomato and saute them for three minutes. Add the garlic salt and mix again.
- 3) After a couple of minutes, add the chicken broth to the pot. Using the same can, fill it with water and add between 3-4 cans of water (enough that all the vegetables are submerged and that there is still enough room in the pot for the meatballs). Add 1 Tbsp (~12 g) chicken bouillon and mix to incorporate everything. Reduce the heat to low. While the vegetables cook, make the meatballs.
- 4) Meatballs: In a medium bowl, add the ground chicken, bread crumbs, the remaining chicken bouillon, rice, ground pepper, minced mint, and egg. Mix all the ingredients until well combined. The texture should feel pliable and should not stick to your hands. Form between 22-25 golf ball-sized meatballs and slightly flatten them. As you form each ball, add them to the pot. Let the meatballs cook for about 40-45 minutes or until the meatballs have risen to the top and the rice in the meatballs has burst.
- 5) As the stew is cooking, a foamy frothy substance will appear due to boiling the chicken. With a wide spoon, carefully skim any large pieces of foam throughout the cooking process.
- 6) In the last 5 min, add the zucchini and stir the pot. Scatter the chopped cilantro on top of the soup. Cover and turn off the heat. After 5 minutes, the dish will be ready to serve.





Nanami's Terrible Day Off

By bisho_curious

Stopping by Jujutsu Tech to file a report is never simple. The campus itself is one massive problem and the biggest one there corners Nanami as he's heading home.

"What a surprise! How's my favorite underclassman?"

"Gojou-san," Nanami frowns, checking his watch. "Don't you have students to teach?"

"I'm trying a new hands-off approach."

"Neglecting them will only hurt them in the long run."

"Someone woke up on the wrong side of the pillow!" Despite Nanami's best efforts to outpace him, Gojou keeps up, refusing Nanami even a moment of peace. "Besides, we need to chat~"

"This couldn't be a text?"

"Ah, but those are easy to ignore." Gojou hums. "Anyway! Got any plans on August 4th?"

That makes Nanami pause for several reasons. It's oddly specific and that points to one thing—nonsense. "That's none of your business."

"Huh," Gojou's voice somehow grows more insufferable. "Maybe not. But it *is* yours!"

There's no time to respond before several sheets of crinkled paper are thrust into Nanami's face.

"Surprise!" Gojou exclaims, obnoxiously flapping the paper around so Nanami can't read the fine print. "You're going to compete on a televised cooking show!"

His reaction must be unreadable enough to prompt more of Gojou's word-vomit. "And you can't say no 'cause it's for charity! You're a charitable person, right, Nanami?"

"No," Nanami snatches the handful of papers and skims the contents. It's an email printout of his alleged application acceptance. "Not particularly."

"Well, people change! So you'll do it?"

It seems awfully inconvenient. It eats up a day off. He wasn't consulted prior. *Gojou* of all people orchestrated this. There's a litany of red flags, yet Nanami isn't turned off to the idea. It's a break from the slog of his typical routine and it's not exactly dangerous.

Also, Gojou is a bastard for using his love of food against him.

Folding the printout neatly and slipping it into an inner pocket of his jacket, Nanami sighs. “I’ll consider it.”



Consideration is a breath away from acceptance. Nanami has been guilty of this sin many times over, especially with Gojou involved.

Yet, Nanami doesn’t feel particularly adverse to this whole situation. He does agree, after all. (After Gojou admits he already accepted on Nanami’s behalf, of course.)

That’s how Nanami finds himself, at the crack of dawn weeks later, standing before a behemoth of a building, all sleek metal and glass on the outskirts of Shibuya. The monstrosity is owned by the television network, home to a variety of channels and programs, including the show Nanami’s competing in.

As he walks inside, Nanami reviews his packet of materials again. He received it a few weeks prior, including directions, details, and digital waivers. Everything is concisely outlined. Nanami respects that.

He heads to the eleventh floor, where the cooking program is located. When the elevator opens, a swarm of bustling people greets him. A harried assistant almost bumps into him toting a plastic crate labeled ‘KNIVES.’ At least he knows he’s in the right place.

Nanami seeks out someone that appears to be in charge, and receives the rundown for the day. In all, between the filming, deliberations and miscellaneous set changes, everything will wrap up in a few hours.

He’s directed to the contestants’ green room, which is conveniently located near the craft services table. A generous assortment of breakfast items are laid out in an attractive spread, including a comically-huge urn of coffee. Nanami gravitates towards it without hesitation.

He definitely is going to need it.

The other two contestants that he’s competing against are already in the green room. Both are women of differing ages, buzzing with anxious energy in the too-cramped space. One of them offers a shy bow—a college student from her appearance. Sato Mina, he learns.

The other almost barrels him over as she introduces herself, almost spilling Nanami’s black coffee all over his dress shirt. He already doesn’t like her. She’s one of those busybody parent types. He’s thankful his own mother is nowhere near this unpleasant.

“Pleasure to make your acquaintance, Tanaka-san,” he lies.

“Call me Aya, dear! Don’t make me feel so old!”

Goodness gracious.

Instead of participating in their too-enthusiastic-for-seven-thirty-in-the-morning conversation, Nanami opts for a stray newspaper on the coffee table. However, he can only ignore them so much. Especially when Tanaka invades his personal space, folding down the page to shamelessly grill him about his personal life.

“Mina-chan’s boyfriend is in the audience today! Isn’t that wonderful? And my own daughter and husband are here, too!” She gushes. “Is anyone special cheering you on, Nanami-san?”

“Hopefully not.”



The bright lights and the clamor on set tell a different story. Nanami instantly senses Gojou’s obvious presence in the hundred or so bodies packed into the uncomfortable-looking audience seats. Even if he hadn’t noticed that insufferable demon, a lanky, familiar body in the very back row shoots up, offering two thumbs up.

“Dammit,” Nanami curses.

Tanaka scolds him. “Manners!”

This was such an ill-advised decision to participate. Yet, there's something intriguing about it all. Never in his life did Nanami ever anticipate doing something so frivolous. It sparks something in his chest he'd prefer to ignore for now. So he does, as the chaos around him only intensifies as they get closer to filming.

Then, from stage right, a group enters. Each individual exudes professionalism and charisma, making them stand out. Nanami faintly recognizes one of them as the host from his research on the show. The others are most likely the judging panel—renown chefs and food critics.

For a final time, a producer spitfires a recap of everything contestants need to remember, the key direction being *personable*.

The host interrupts the group with a dazzling smile. "Y'all ready to have some fun?"

Everything about him seems too perfect, from his hair to his clothes. It's unnerving.

Nanami's curt bow gets overshadowed by the shrieks from his competitors. The host drinks it up, teasing them to *save it for the camera* before sauntering away to speak with an exhausted man holding a clipboard.

It isn't long before Nanami is mic'd up and dragged to a specific spot on the stage, lined up with his competition. Upstage, the judges sit at their table. The studio lights dim, someone near the camera bay calling *quiet on set*.

It's a few seconds before enthusiastic applause explodes from the audience. A piercing wolf whistle cuts through the noise, and Nanami has to stop himself from frowning while the cameras begin rolling.

A sudden spotlight illuminates the host. "Who's ready to get *slicey* with it?"

Dear god.

After a moment, the set brightens, the room awash in warm intensity. As the applause crests, the host begins. "Welcome back to another heated episode of Battle Kitchen! It's the only place on tv to find strangers fighting to win it all with nothing but their pots and pans!"

Could this get any cheesier?

"Despite the name, our show is for a good cause. As you all know, the winner of Battle Kitchen gets to make a donation to a charity of their choice!" Fresh applause answers the host's explanation. It's impossible that it isn't prompted. Even under the heat of the lights, Nanami refuses to get swept away by any television magic.

"Let's meet our competitors today, shall we?" That obnoxious wolf whistle pierces through the studio, again. The host chuckles. "Pretty fired up for today's brave souls, huh?"

On cue, lilting laughter answers the terrible joke.

"Well, let's not waste any time!" The host zips to where they're all lined up. Unfortunately, with the way they're positioned, Nanami is up first.

"Our first contestant is a twenty-seven-year-old *business professional* from Tokyo, Nanami Kento! A pleasure to have you on the show. Lookin' spiffy, by the way!" Nanami ducks his head at the burst of applause. Thankfully, no other sounds follow. "Now, Nanami-san, can you share a fun fact about yourself?"

"I would rather not."

"Ah, now that's—*Huh?*" That catches the energetic host off guard. "W-well, surely there's something interesting you'd like for our viewers to know about you!"

"Not really."

There is a beat of excruciating silence where the host loses the spark in his eyes. But in a flash, he regains his typical, effervescent persona. "Ah, Nanami-san is playing hard to get. I mean, we only just met!" Nanami's jaw tenses at the booming audience laughter. "Which charity are you competing for?"

"Nakano Children's Soup Kitchen."

"How generous! The kids are counting on you."

Before Nanami opens his mouth, the host has already moved on. However, Nanami doesn't miss the peeved glance he

shoots his way before resuming his playful banter.

Introductions don't last long. Tanaka is competing for an animal shelter while Sato is fundraising for her college club volleyball team. When concluded, the host transitions into a summary of the competition.

"We know the players, and now for the game. As usual, contestants have forty-five minutes to whip up their signature dish. Afterwards, our wonderful, illustrious judging panel will critique each dish and then crown a winner." The host quickly walks through the judging panel—a chef from Ginza and two critics from popular dining publications. They all wave, smiling at the audience's warm reception, wishing the contestants luck. When everything settles, the host flourishes his arm.

"Simple enough, yeah? Contestants, on my signal, go to your cooking stations! Can I get some help with the countdown?"

The audience chants along with him. "*Three, two, one... GO!!*"

Both Sato and Tanaka make a run for it, almost tripping over themselves. *Nothing* will make Nanami humiliate himself like that on television, especially not in front of all the elderly viewers and homebodies who most likely make up the at-home viewership for this ridiculous show. He even ignores the host's goading. *C'mon, buddy, you planning on taking this seriously, or what?!*

When he gets there, at his own pace, he sees that his station is an efficient set-up, consisting of a refrigerator, stove top burners, an oven, and counter space. Weeks ago, he had to declare his recipe to the show, and he notices all ingredients and cookery that he requested are present.

He chose an easy, yet tasty dish he first had several years ago on a mission overseas: bourbon chicken. To highlight the succulent, rich-flavor of the protein, he's serving it over rice with fresh scallions.

The first thing Nanami does is assemble his ingredients. He can hear the frenetic energy of his competition dropping things and giggling along with the host's teasing. He will not get caught up in this nonsense. It's only here to distract him.

Nanami grabs the bag of jasmine rice, a saucepan and a mesh colander from the lower cabinets. He measures out the rice into the colander and then adds the corresponding ratio of water to the saucepan, turning on the burner. Rice is the component that takes the longest, so he starts there. Besides, he could never refer to himself as a homecook ever again with confidence if he served less-than-perfect rice.

Once the rice is rinsed, Nanami focuses on the *mise en place*, chopping, measuring and preparing all of his ingredients prior to cooking. Nanami makes quick work of the scallions and garlic on the cutting board before tackling the chicken, removing excess fat and cubing it in like-size bits to ensure even cooking.

As the water boils, he adds in the rice and covers the pot. It's unfortunate they didn't provide a rice cooker, but it is a cooking show, he supposes.

In his peripheral, he notices a body marching towards him. Great. Nanami ignores it for as long as he can until he feels a hand on his shoulder.

"Tell the audience what you're up to." It doesn't escape Nanami that this isn't a question.

"Bourbon chicken," he says, not looking away from his task, which is measuring out his oil and soy sauce. "Unlike many popular iterations of the recipe, I will in fact be using bourbon."

"Oh, I can't wait!" The host sneers. "Don't mess up."

Why does this man despise him? Some people have nothing better to do than hold vendettas against strangers. Men like this make jujutsu sorcerers work so much harder.

Cooking is typically relaxing for Nanami. On set, it's a nightmare. Tanaka and Sato are overcome by the hosts' antics, being far louder and more *personable* than necessary. He almost gets indigestion when Sato screeches, "It'll burn if you keep making me laugh, sir!"

Staying calm, he checks the clock and sees he's making good time. However, as soon as Nanami's fingers brush against the bourbon bottle, the host suddenly materializes behind him. Wasn't this guy just here?

“Explain what you’re doing now, Nanami-san!”

“Well,” he says, dumping the bottle into a large prep bowl, whisking it in with the other ingredients. “I’m adding a shot’s worth of bourbon to the sauce mixture.”

“Ah, excellent! That sounds—how much bourbon did you say?”

“A shot.”

“O-oh, that’s a rather generous shot.” He says, watching Nanami pour. “Or four.”

Nanami doesn’t rise to the bait. This is just another method of sabotage. Besides, he’s here to cook, *not* entertain. If anything, Nanami just gave that annoying man his personal fun fact. Nanami adds in more bourbon just to spite him.

The host isn’t fazed. “Do you think you and I can share a drink after this?”

“I have plans, sorry.”

“He just won’t let me win, folks!” The host moves the microphone away from his mouth, muttering quickly as he leaves Nanami’s station. “Fix your *damn* attitude.”

Nanami stares directly at the camera, hoping at least one person empathizes with his plight.

With less than twenty minutes to go, Nanami starts cooking the chicken. He won’t be able to stew everything as long as he usually does, but he’s sure things will turn out tasty enough.

As the chicken browns, he carefully adds the garlic and the sauce mixture into the pan. As the liquid begins bubbling, he throws a lid on it, letting it simmer until he needs to start plating.

Instead of waiting around, he busies himself with cleaning to minimize the target on his back. It turns out, it’s more fun to harass someone who’s racing the clock than someone who’s leisurely scrubbing gunk off cutting boards. When it’s time to plate, he serves out four portions of rice, topping them with the saucy chicken.

It’s then that Nanami realizes his scallions are missing.

In his ear, there’s a whisper. “Forgetting something, Nanami-san?”

He’s holding Nanami’s bowl of scallions with a devious smirk. That bastard.

“Give those back.”

“Come get them!”

“I’m not chasing you.”

“You won’t?” The host feigns sadness. “Aren’t we friends?”

Nanami storms over to the host. With his technique, he immediately identifies his weak point. Just a jab to his gut, he’d be *done*. His murderous intent, however, never gets to follow through. The host squeaks out *just kidding* as he returns the bowl with only seconds to spare. Nanami would *deck* him if he wasn’t frantically sprinkling scallions over his dish.

A buzzer blares just as Nanami finishes.

“Stop!” The host bellows. “After this commercial break, it’s judging time!”

Nanami considers leaving while the set changes.

• • • • •

But he doesn’t.

When they return, Nanami notices the cooking stations have vanished. Judging begins promptly once the cameras roll.

“Sato-san, you’re first!”

She prepared cacio e pepe, and it looks... *fine*. Next up, Tanaka presents omurice. The judges offer succinct critique, mentioning technique, seasoning, and presentation. It’s lukewarm and surface-level enough for daytime television. Still, even so, Nanami finds himself looking forward to their review.

“And finally, my *pal*!” There’s a mocking edge to his tone that makes Nanami hate him more. “C’m on up here, Nanami-san!”

It's then that the loudest, most obnoxious wolf-whistle pierces the air.

"Hey!" The host barks into his microphone, losing his cool finally. "Settle down!"

Nanami feels the self-satisfaction rolling off Gojou from across the room as he and a stagehand set his dishes in front of the judges.

The panel, including the host, takes a bite. Nanami observes their expressions, looking for any tells to betray their true opinions. The stoicism, even from the host, is frustrating. One judge remarks about his liberal use of alcohol. Nanami frowns when the audience giggles.

"The rice is perfect," another says.

"It better be," Nanami retorts.

There's a few more comments that reveal absolutely nothing before the host announces it's deliberation time.

Nanami and the other contestants are released to the green room while the verdict is decided. He spends most of his time trying to dodge their cycle of what-ifs and their guessing of the victor.

It's half an hour before they get called back, told to line up the same as when the show began. The host gets the go ahead and immediately hams up the suspense.

"The winner of Battle Kitchen is..."

The entire studio is silent. His competition's breathing stills while the host drums up the tension before the deafening reveal.

"...Tanaka-san and her mouth-watering omurice!"

The audience erupts into triumphant cheering as Tanaka starts bawling, blabbering about her happiness and the animal shelter her donation will support. Nanami congratulates her as the judges swarm her, the host offering her a bouquet. There's confetti. It's exhausting.

After a bit, there's a loud call of *that's a wrap!* Nanami sighs, loosening his tie.

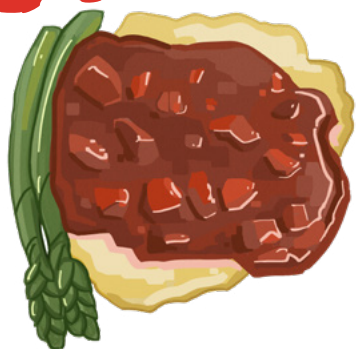
Finally.

As he heads towards the green room, someone cuts him off. It's the host, looking exasperated. "Listen," he says, his voice devoid of any enthusiasm. "Your chicken was delicious and was our favorite. But here's a word of advice: chill out if you want to go anywhere in life."

"I've been to too many places already," Nanami deadpans. "I'm tired."

As he leaves the host in shock, Nanami decides he'll force Gojou to write a check for his charity as compensation for putting him through this disaster. It's only fair.





Serves 5 people
Time Required: Best started
2 days before serving

Marinade Ingredients

800g (1.75 lbs) braising beef, diced into chunks
1 bottle (750ml) of red wine*
2 pods of star anise
4 Bay leaves
2 sticks of cinnamon
1 tsp (5g) nutmeg powder
1 Tbsp (5g) ground cloves
An equal bunch of fresh roasting herbs
(rosemary, thyme, oregano)*
1 white onion, quartered
2 medium carrots, diced into large cubes
1 Tbsp (15ml) honey
1 Tbsp (15ml) treacle*
Zest of 1 orange

Stew Ingredients

Onion and carrots from marinade
(see above)
2 Tbsp (30ml) olive oil
3 Tbsp (45g) butter
250g chestnut mushrooms, halves
8 strips of bacon rashers - unsmoked
4 garlic cloves, crushed
2 Tbsp (30g) tomato paste
1 Tbsp (15ml) honey
3 Tbsp (45g) cornstarch
700ml beef stock (from 2 stock pots)

Nanami's Mulled Wine Stew

Recipe by Ken

Directions

- 1) Prepare your Beef Marinade. Put the majority of the marinade ingredients in a big bowl; reserve 1 cinnamon stick and 2 bay leaves for later, and marinate beef and vegetables for 24 - 36hrs. Ensure the beef and vegetables are fully submerged in the liquid.
- 2) Afterwards, strain the liquid into a pot and separate the beef, onions and carrots into clean bowls. Replace the bay leaf and cinnamon sticks with fresh ones.
- 3) Simmer the marinade liquid on medium heat to reduce for 10 minutes. Skim off any scum that rises to the surface.
- 4) While the marinade is reducing, dry off the beef with a paper towel and season with a pinch of salt and pepper.
- 5) Ready the marinated vegetables and dice the bacon into 2 inch strips.
- 6) In an oven proof pot or dish (such as a dutch oven), heat the olive oil over medium high heat and brown the seasoned beef. Afterwards, put the beef on a plate and let it rest until needed.
- 7) In the same pot, add the remaining oil and fry the bacon until golden. Afterwards, set it aside with the beef.
- 8) Keeping the heat at medium high, add 1 tbsp of butter and fry the crushed garlic for a minute. Add in the onion and saute for 5 minutes until onions are translucent and beginning to brown. Set aside in a bowl.
- 9) Reduce the heat to medium low and fry the mushrooms until golden. Set aside with the onions and garlic.
- 10) Add 1 tbsp of butter into the pot and cook the carrots until there is slight charring at the edges. Remove and set aside in another bowl.
- 11) Finally, create a roux for the stew. Add a tablespoon of butter and a drizzle of oil into the pot. Fry the tomato paste for 1 minute, being careful not to burn it. Mix in the honey and fry for another minute. Take the cornstarch and slowly incorporate into the tomato and honey mix, stirring vigorously to form a smooth roux-like paste.
- 12) Slowly whisk in the beef stock and continue to stir well to prevent lumps. Afterwards, add the reduced wine marinade and keep stirring until the mixture is glossy.
- 13) Add in the beef and the sauteed vegetables and stir well.
- 14) Transfer to a preheated oven (180 celsius / 356 fahrenheit) for 30-40 minutes, then mix in the onions and mushrooms (to prevent disintegration)
- 15) Leave in the oven for 2 hours until the beef is tender. Let it cool for 10 minutes at room temperature then chill in the fridge overnight.
- 16) Reheat on low heat till the stew is warm, then serve with mashed potatoes and vegetables of your choice.







Menchi Katsu on Mashed Potato with Pea & Carrot Gravy

Recipe by Cate

Ingredients

MASHED POTATO

1 tsp (6g) salt
½ tsp (1.5g) minced garlic
1 Tbsp (3.5g) diced onion
2 medium-large (750g) high starch potatoes
¼ cup (55g) salted butter, softened
¼ cup (60g) whipping cream
Salt and pepper to taste

MENCHI KATSU (BREADED PATTY)

7 oz (200g) thinly sliced fatty beef (ribeye or chuck)
7 oz (200g) thinly sliced pork belly
3.5 oz (100g) diced sweet onion
1 tsp (6g) salt
1 tsp (4g) granulated sugar
1 Tbsp (15g) mirin
1 egg
⅓ cup (45g) all-purpose flour
1 Beaten egg
1 cup panko (japanese breadcrumbs)

STEWED PEAS & CARROTS

⅔ cup (150 ml) milk
⅔ cup (150 ml) water
1.5 Tbsp (25g) salted butter
1 tsp (3.5g) chicken bouillon powder
2.5 Tbsp (20g) all-purpose flour
¾ cup (100g) frozen peas, thawed
¾ cup (100g) frozen diced carrot, thawed
Black pepper to taste

Serves 3 people

Prep Time: 30 min

Total Time: 60 min

Directions

- 1) Peel potatoes, removing all spots and lumps, and cut into quarters lengthwise.
- 2) In a large pot filled ⅔ with water, add the salt, minced garlic and diced onion and bring to a boil. Once boiling, add the potatoes and cook on medium until tender (about 20 minutes).
- 3) As the potatoes boil, cut the beef and pork slices into very thin strips. Add the meat to a bowl with the diced onion, salt, sugar, mirin and an egg. Using your hands, mix ingredients together until all ingredients are well combined.
- 4) Divide the meat into 6 portions, tossing each one from one hand to the other to release the air inside. Flatten slightly into a patty, then refrigerate to solidify the fat while preparing mashed potatoes.
- 5) Drain cooked potatoes, then add softened butter and whipping cream. Mash with a potato masher until smooth. Add salt or pepper to taste, cover and set aside.
- 6) Prepare three separate bowls for flour, beaten egg, and panko. Coat each meat patty in flour, egg and then panko, reshaping the patty into a nice flat, circular shape if necessary.
- 7) Heat frying oil to about 330°F/165°C and place the patties into the oil. Let it sit undisturbed for 2 minutes before flipping every couple of minutes (4 minutes on each side, 8 minutes total).
- 8) Transfer patties to a wire rack to drain excess oil and continue cooking through residual internal heat. Scoop out crumbs from oil after each batch of patties.
- 9) To make the sauce, bring the milk and water to a boil. Turn the heat to medium, then whisk in the butter, chicken bouillon powder, and flour until there are no lumps. Finally, add in the thawed frozen peas and carrots, and continue whisking on low heat until sauce thickens to desired consistency. Add black pepper to taste if desired.
- 10) Serve the menchi katsu with mashed potato topped with stewed carrots and peas. If packing for later, keep menchi katsu separated from mashed potato and stewed carrots and peas until eating to avoid sogginess.

Grocery Shopping

By Vero

Nanami sighs as he walks into his apartment. He knew the higher ups weren't amazing, to say the least, but back-to-back missions for a month straight is a little ridiculous even for them.

He sends a text to Yaga as he toes off his shoes in the entry, a quick inquiry to make sure the higher ups hadn't just been distracting him to try and secretly kill off another student. He rolls his eyes as the message gets read and receives no response. Everyone is probably fine then. Yaga would have reached out in some regard if the higher ups were planning something, if only to get help in dealing with Gojo's reaction to it.

He tosses his phone onto the couch and walks into the kitchen. He can check in on everyone after having a proper meal. An additional downside to constant missions is that it's almost impossible to get a proper meal. Traveling constantly, on top of staying alert for curses, means that he is lucky to get a decent night's sleep, let alone decent food. Now that he is home he can quickly make something for himself, then pass out long enough to catch up on all the sleep he has missed. Then wake up and make himself something that is *actually* nice.

But for now he can settle for whipping together whatever he has available. He is already exhausted, and his usual cuisine standards can stay on the back burner until his eyes have been closed for twelve hours or longer.

He pulls open his fridge, already trying to think about what he could make and eat within the next hour. He could probably find enough to make something decent, but would it be worth the time to make something better than decent? Maybe he'd sleep better if the food was—

His thoughts are stopped by the state of his fridge as he finally peers into it.

He blinks as he stares at it. This... isn't right. There is almost nothing in it, only a few bottles of sauce, a pack of sausages, and a half opened can of... something that had obviously gone bad. But that can't be right because he had been here last week, and sure he had cleared stuff from his cabinets and fridge out, but only because he was going to restock after. He had cleared out the fridge, eaten what he could, laid down for a nap, and then he had...

He sighs, and lets his head fall into his hands. And then he had received another mission from the school, and instead of going grocery shopping, he had gone on the next train to Miyagi to fight what was supposedly classified as a grade 2 curse, but had ended up being a grade 1. Then he had gotten another assignment, alongside Ino, and had found himself preoccupied until now. Leaving him with an empty kitchen.

After another five minutes of fruitlessly checking the rest of his kitchen, he accepts that he has two options: order in or try and make the fastest grocery run of his life. Ordering in is the obvious choice. He would have to wait, but it would take less effort and

less time than going out and cooking himself.

An easy choice then, just grab his phone and call the nearest place with delivery, stay awake until it arrives and worry about real food once he wakes up later. He has been eating whatever he could find for the past month already, he can handle it for one more day.

He... he can handle it.

He can.

He stares at his phone. Then breathes in and pinches the bridge of his nose. 20 minutes, 25 at most. He already had a dish in mind. If he grabbed everything quickly and the lines weren't horrible he could be back home in 25 minutes. Then he could cook himself actual food and sleep for the next 20 hours before properly reorienting himself in his apartment.

Exactly 7 minutes and 39 seconds later Nanami finds himself outside of the nearest grocery store, ready to grab a basket and buy the bare minimum for a single meal. He can figure the rest out later; he's sure his future self will curse him for it but he can cross that bridge when he gets to it.

4 minutes and 17 seconds later he's rounding back around to the produce section of the store when he sees Kugisaki.

It's a testament to her aura that Nanami instinctively freezes when he sees her. Or a testament to how much he does *not* want to spend any more time here than he has to.

She's standing in front of what seems to be an assortment of salads and Nanami has no idea what she could be doing this far off campus when, last time he checked, the school had a perfectly functioning cafeteria and kitchen. Still, it's not his business and if he wants to get home and get to bed before the hour he will have to ignore her.

This is what he tells himself as he sneaks past a 16 year old girl in the grocery store. He is being completely reasonable. This is a completely reasonable, and adult response... and if it isn't, he will blame it on the sleep deprivation.

He grabs what he needs and ducks out, telling himself that the only reason he is headed to the other side of the store is because that is where his next ingredient is, not because he is running away.

3 minutes and 24 seconds later he's back next to the produce section wondering if maybe he should just switch out what he planned to eat for something else. He forgot to grab everything he needed while he was there the first time (rookie mistake) and Kugisaki is still staring at the salads. Why, he isn't sure, but what he is sure about is that sneaking around the produce area twice in one day is too much for one meal.

He sighs, accepting his fate, and just walks back in to grab what he needs. If Kugisaki decides to try and strike up conversation he will politely turn her down. He's sure she would understand fatigue from overwork.

He braces himself for her questions when he walks past her, but she stays quiet. He raises an eyebrow but continues walking—perhaps she rather avoid confrontation as well. He glances back towards her as he grabs the last items on his list. She still hasn't moved. He's fairly sure she hasn't moved from when he first saw her, now almost 5 minutes ago.

He tells himself that she will be fine, urging himself to walk back past her to the register. The lines aren't long, and if he leaves now, he will get home quickly and get to bed even faster. He starts moving past her, her eyes never leaving the assortment of salads. He stares at her before reaching over and grabbing a salad he absolutely doesn't need.

No reaction.

He sighs. Fine. He will just ask her if everything was okay, just to make sure. She is probably fine anyways, but it would be good to ask. Then he can go home, eat, sleep, and worry about this whenever he wakes up.

"Kugisaki," he begins, doing his best not to react when she jumps. "Is there an issue?"

"Huh?" She looks at him, eyes lingering on his glasses, tie, and what was showing of his holster. "Nothing's wrong." She hesitates. "...Nanami?"

Nanami raises an eyebrow. It is increasingly obvious that if she knew who he was at all, it was all second hand. Not that he is much different, only having heard of Kugisaki through her teachers.

"Is that why you've been sitting here for the past five minutes staring at salads?"

She scowls at him, thinking of something nasty to respond with most likely. But before it comes out she hesitates and glances back at the salads, she looks back at him. "I'm just... considering my options. Shopping is an art that requires both your soul and mind."

"Do you need help then?" he asks before she can continue on about the requirements of shopping. He bites his tongue immediately after the words leave his mouth, and mourns any chance he had of getting home in the next ten minutes. She tenses, looking ready to reject him. But then she looks at her empty basket and looks back at him and his almost full one. She clenches her teeth but nods, straightening up and crossing her arms, and giving him an expectant look.

He sighs as Kugisaki agrees. Well, he has officially done this to himself. He wants to tell himself it won't take long but he was already planning out what meal she could make for herself and they would have to go around the whole store again to get everything. He lets her decide on one of the containers of salad and then heads to the produce.

"So," he starts, glancing at the prices— why were these onions so expensive? "Is there a reason you're shopping at the grocery store over 30 minutes away instead of the one down the road from the school?"

Kugisaki scowls. "I don't know, why are *you* shopping at the grocery store 30 minutes away from school?"

Nanami raises an eyebrow in her direction as he grabs what he needs. "While it may come as a surprise to you, I do happen to be an adult who does not have to live at school."

She grumbles as he grabs more ingredients. She could handle menchi katsu, couldn't she? He wasn't sure about her skill in cooking but as long as she wasn't as bad off as Megumi, it shouldn't present too much of an issue. Even then, he's sure at least one of the staff there would help her with it if she asked.

He pauses in the middle of grabbing a small bag of sugar (she wouldn't need much but he didn't want to risk the school not having any supplied), watching her follow sulkily with a pout, still whining over whatever verbal victory Nanami had just achieved. He will have to remind her to ask for help if she needs it before they leave.

"You know, you still haven't answered," Nanami points out as he tries to decide which box of breadcrumbs to buy. Why did they have so many different brands of this?

Kugisaki huffs and crosses her arms. "I don't see why it's any of your business, maybe I just like this store more," she peers into her basket. "Why do we even need all this anyways? What are you trying to get me to make?"

Nanami hums as he puts the breadcrumbs in the basket. "You were looking at the salads earlier weren't you? Maybe this is an incredibly elaborate salad."

"Right, because the two things everyone wants on every salad are flour and sugar." She brings the flour up to her face, "I didn't even know they sold small bags of flour, I thought it was only those huge ones."

Well she had him there, maybe he should look around later to see if there *are* any salads with sugar and flour. It could be an interesting combination (if not one he wasn't sure he was crazy about yet).

He changes the subject. "Did you cook at home before coming to school?"

Kugisaki shrugs, trailing behind him as they move on. "Sometimes with my grandmother. She would bring me shopping for food too and I would wander around if she took too long with anything."

"Have you shopped without your grandmother around?"

Kugisaki takes a little longer to respond this time. "...Not much, I was just eating in the cafeteria until recently, but Itadori started cooking again so I figured maybe I should too." She purses her lips. "I... didn't really want to run into anyone, which is why I came here." She glances up at him. "Don't tell anyone I came here."

It's not a question, but Nanami responds anyway. "I won't. I know Gojo has a nasty habit of showing up when you least want to see him."

"That implies there's ever a time that I *want* to see Gojo," Kugisaki scoffs, but the tension has left her and she goes back to staring at the contents of the basket they have. "Okay but what *is* this supposed to be?" She starts pulling out random contents of the basket and bringing them up to her face. "Menchu Katsu?"

Nanami chooses a random box of breadcrumbs and puts it in the basket, “Yes, but I’m adding a little extra. It’s good for you and something my grandparents made me from time to time. It shouldn’t be too difficult for you to replicate.” She opens her mouth, doubt already forming and he quickly adds, “I’ll send you the recipe they used if you’re worried.”

“I wasn’t,” Kugisaki responds with a hmpf. She pauses. “But thank you.”

“It’s really no problem, but I hope you don’t mind waiting a bit to get it because our cookbook has been buried somewhere in my apartment for years and I also haven’t slept properly for the past month,” Nanami sighs, checking his watch. He sees Kugisaki tense again and continues, “But it’ll be nice to be able to find it again, it’s been too long since I’ve had Danish cuisine.”

Kugisaki accepts the words easily, understanding that Nanami is doing this willingly, that she isn’t a burden for him. She’s digging through the basket again, interest rekindled now that she knows what they are making.

“Do we really need this for menchi katsu?” she asks, pulling the whipping cream out of the basket. She hums as she squints at the other contents of the basket. “Is it for the potatoes?”

Nanami nods. “I’m getting what you would need for the addition to the menchi katsu. It may seem a bit indulgent but I’ve found the combination of the two to be quite a wonderful comfort food. Neither are particularly fancy but I have a feeling you may enjoy it.”

Kugisaki nods, putting everything she had pulled out back carefully as they walked to the cashiers. “My grandma would make me menchi katsu sometimes. Never for any big occasions, but it was nice to have something to rely on out there in the middle of nowhere.”

Nanami has a feeling that the last part isn’t just about the food. He can tell there’s probably more behind that, but the middle of the line for the lane 2 cashier isn’t the place to unpack it all. Nor is he the best person to do the unpacking itself. Especially in his current state.

So instead he nods and lets the line move forward. “Then I’m glad I’ve managed to find something familiar for you to recreate. It shouldn’t be impossible, but I hope you remember there are others at the school who can help if you need it.”

Kugisaki glances up at him. “Does that include you?”

Nanami blinks in surprise. “If you want it to. I’m not a teacher, but I’m not Itadori’s private mentor either.”

Kugisaki starts to smile, eyes crinkling. “Did you give Itadori secret cooking lessons? Is that why he’s so good at it? Did you manage to find time between killing curses to make him cook you his weird meatball things? Have you been hiding this secret side to your teaching methods?”

Nanami rolls his eyes, aware any formality has officially left the air.

“I did not give Itadori any cooking lessons, but if you would like for me to help you I wouldn’t be against it.” He helps Kugisaki load the groceries onto the belt, adding his own as well. He can pay, his salary as a sorcerer is enough that groceries hardly make a dent in his wallet anymore.

Kugisaki sends him a sharp smile as their groceries get bagged. “Hah, by the time you stop by the school next I’ll already be a master chef. But I’ll let you cook with me anyways.”

Nanami doesn’t roll his eyes, but it’s a near thing. They leave the store on that note, Nanami waving as Kugisaki walks back to the train to the school. Kugisaki doesn’t turn around, but holds up a peace sign as she walks away. Nanami *does* roll his eyes at that.

He begins the walk back to his apartment, no longer as rushed as he was on the way here. He shifts his bags and wonders if Megumi has it in him to start to learn to cook. It is probably about time anyways.

He smirks at that. The day Megumi found his way around the kitchen will be the day Nanami quits as a sorcerer. But if Kugisaki did learn properly, he would be outnumbered by the rest of his class, and Kugisaki didn’t seem like the kind of person to let a friend’s culinary inability go untreated once she had overcome it.

He chuckles to himself. It seems that Jujutsu Tech has quite the culinary storm coming, whether for better or worse.

He smiles and shifts his bags again, pushing down a yawn. Maybe he will have enough energy to unearth his grandfather’s cookbook before he passes out. His smile grows, the warmth from the day finally settling in. That would be nice.



Cassecroute Babka

Recipe by Eline

Yield 1 Loaf, approx. 12 slices

Prep Time: 60 min

Total Rise Time: 5 hr 45 min

Bake Time: 40 min

Bread Ingredients

50ml (3 Tbsp and 1 tsp) milk

5g (1 ¾ tsp) yeast

285g (2 ¼ cups) flour

4g (¾ tsp) salt

30g (2 ½ tbsp) sugar

1 tsp djintan (ground cumin)

1 tsp thyme

3 eggs

70g (⅓ cup) butter

Filling Ingredients

45g (1.6 oz) (approx. 5) sun-dried tomatoes

60g (2.1 oz) (half a small) yellow bell pepper

150g (5.3 oz) harissa

30g (1 oz) sliced black olives

60g (2.1 oz) (6 slices) smoked chicken breast

Optional: brie or other soft cheese

Directions

- 1) Heat the milk to lukewarm (about 40 °C/105 °F) in a microwave or saucepan, then add the yeast and a tablespoon of the sugar. Set mixture aside for 5-10 minutes, until bubbly.
- 2) Mix the flour, salt, sugar, and herbs together in a mixing bowl. Add in eggs and yeast mixture, and knead together into an even dough. For convenience, a stand mixer with a dough hook can be used to knead or you can knead with just one hand, as the dough will be quite sticky.
- 3) Once the dough is well-mixed, add in the butter and knead for another 8 minutes. Do not add more flour—the dough should remain very sticky.
- 4) Loosely cover your mixing bowl with a damp tea-towel or plastic wrap and let the dough rise for 1 hour in a warm spot. (If your house is cold, you can proof the bread in your oven on the lowest setting. Take care not to overheat the dough.) When it has risen, chill in the refrigerator overnight (minimum four hours).
- 5) Just before you get the dough out of the fridge, dice the sun-dried tomatoes and bell pepper.
- 6) Cover your work surface in flour so the dough won't stick. Roll out the dough into a large rectangle (approx. 40 by 25 cm/16 by 10 inch) and spread the harissa on top. Evenly spread the tomatoes, bell pepper, and olives on the harissa, then lay the chicken slices on top.
- 7) Roll the dough rectangle up over its long side and put it back in the fridge to firm up a bit again. Slice the roll in half along the long side and braid the strands by winding them around each other. Take care to not let too much of the filling fall out, and try to have the “veins” of filling show on top.
- 8) Line a long loaf pan or cake pan with baking paper and place the bread in it.
- 9) Loosely cover the dough with a damp tea-towel or plastic wrap and put the pan in a warm spot for the second rise, about 45 minutes.
- 10) Bake the bread at 190 °C/375 °F for 40 minutes. If the top browns too quickly, cover with aluminum foil after 15 minutes.
- 11) The bread is best served hot. Cut off a slice and eat it with brie or another soft cheese, though it's also delicious on its own or with your savoury topping of choice!





@ mihaellustrates ✓

your hands stretch outwards; my hands stretch towards you

By iwaoiks

Kento's day-to-day starts like this: every morning he wakes, and the monstera in his bedroom whines from a lack of attention. Kento sighs, two parts fond, three parts exasperated, before getting up from bed to attend to its needs. He always does this before brushing his own teeth. It's a routine.

Today, Kento awakes, and he cannot bring himself to get out of bed. The morning light from the windows is soft and pretty, and the kind Kento would usually appreciate given any other day, but today it feels blinding to him, even with the shield of his eyelids and the slow raise of his hand to cover his face. His head is pounding. His limbs feel heavy with the weight of more than just lingering slumber.

A fever, he thinks, groaning lightly. His monstera perks up at the sound, curiously flapping its leaves at him.

Kento sighs, three parts tired, two parts worried. There is still so much to do. Potions to brew, spell orders to fulfil, and he needs to pick up some herbs from the apothecary a block over. Not to mention the shop— he can't afford to be sick. Not today, or any other.

Kento is weighing the pros and cons of getting out of bed to brew a healing potion (pros: healing potion; cons: getting out of bed) when there's a pounding on his front door. A splitting ache cuts through his head at the sound— there's only one person uncivil enough to appear at his door at this hour, in this manner, and Kento is two-thirds convinced his health will only deteriorate with this presence. But the pounding continues, graceless. Praying he'll be left alone isn't an option.

The world spins off its axis when Kento sits up, a herculean effort just to swing his legs to the side of the bed and plant his feet on the ground. Kento pauses, and with him so does the incessant knocking. Maybe the person on the other side of the door has found it strange, that Kento isn't there to shoo him away yet. Regardless, Kento is grateful for the quiet.

It doesn't last long. Kento blinks, and suddenly, right in front of him: Gojou Satoru.

"Yo, Nanami," Gojou grins, annoying. Kento groans again, his headache pulsing.

If Gojou were any other cultured, respectful human being, he would know not to enter a witch's home without permission like this. But this is Gojou Satoru, of course, so manners go out the window; he's probably here to bother Kento about some ridiculous potion that doesn't exist, or one of the forbidden spells he *knows* he shouldn't use— like it's some kind of routine, to annoy Kento like this. Kento's brow twitches at the sight of Gojou here.

He tries to stand, moves to usher Gojou out the door, but it's like the world slants sideways and Kento staggers forward in his haze. Gojou just manages to catch him.

"Whoa, are you okay?" he asks, and what a funny thing, to hear Gojou Satoru of all people sound *worried*. Kento doesn't have the energy to laugh, even mirthlessly.

"...Fever," he murmurs instead, closing his eyes against the sunlight. Against the slight concern in the tilt of Gojou's careful smile, which agitates him. He doesn't need to be babied.

Somehow, without him noticing, Gojou has guided him back into bed, and when he opens his eyes again Gojou has already moved to the windows to shut the curtains. “Well, you’re in luck,” Gojou says around a grin, dust particles in the light floating about his untamed hair. Kento feels misfortune brewing in the wake of his words. “I happen to be free today.”

Kento’s brows furrows. Surely he can’t mean—

“Let me take care of you,” Gojou says, mouth softening into a smile Kento’s never seen on him before. In the filtered light, it almost looks... kind. What a strange thing.

Kento weighs the pros and cons of leaving his care in the hands of Gojou Satoru (cons: Gojou Satoru; pros: yet to be seen) and sighs when it only makes his headache worse. He supposes there is no point in protesting, even if he had the energy. Kento nods in defeat, leaning back against his pillows.

“You better not burn my house down,” he says, still managing to sound stern. Small victories, he thinks.

“No promises,” Gojou says, that ever-sharp grin back in his voice.



Without meaning to, Kento falls asleep. When he wakes again, he’s pretty sure he smells something burning.

There’s a wet cloth on his forehead and a glass of water by his bedside. He sets the cloth aside, drinks some water, plants his feet on the ground. His headache has subsided enough that he can get out of bed without toppling over. The monstera in his bedroom quietly extends its leaves towards Kento when he passes by, as if to steady him lest he falls, and Kento manages a fond smile that makes it preen. Out the door of his bedroom, the rest of the upper floor of his shophouse is full of life: his potted plants bathe contentedly in the early afternoon sunlight, and he can hear light music playing from the shop downstairs. Something is definitely burning in the kitchen.

He approaches the figure by the stove, who seems equal parts panicked and overconfident. “I thought I told you,” Kento says, voice hoarse— his throat hurts around the words, and that’s another thing he hates about being sick, the grittiness of it all— “that arson in my house is prohibited.”

“Nanami!” Gojou exclaims, turning to him, and he sounds like he’s been caught red-handed. The smoke billowing from behind his frame does nothing to help his case.

When he sees the look on Kento’s face, Gojou’s grin falters slightly. “In my defense, there hasn’t been a fire,” he says, like that’s of any assurance. “Yet,” he adds, when the stove huffs out a puff of smoke.

Kento can feel his headache worsening already. Almost like he can tell what Kento’s thinking, Gojou raises his hands in defeat, his grin turning into a frown. “Okay, okay! I’ll stop trying to cook.” Then he moves away from the stove, untying the apron around his waist— what on *earth* is that black blotch in the center?— as he makes his way to the staircase leading to the shop.

“Yuuji!” he cries, and Kento raises a confused brow. A clamour downstairs, then: the pink of Itadori Yuuji’s hair.

“Nanamin!” The excited burst of Itadori’s voice brings a ruffle of life through the leaves of the plants in Kento’s home. A fact Kento has learned since the day he first met the boy: wherever Itadori goes, sunshine soon follows.

“Itadori-kun,” Kento calls, fond without meaning to. “Why are you...?”

“Gojou sensei asked us to help out,” he answers, and at Kento’s confused look at the word *us*, he adds, “Fushiguro and Kugisaki are downstairs, tending to the shop.”

Kento opens his mouth, but Gojou beats him to it. “You do so much on your own, Nanami, I don’t know how you do it.” That makes Kento pause, surprised that Gojou thinks so. He... isn’t sure what to say to that. In the silence that follows Gojou’s mouth softens, and he gives Kento an out that Kento is grateful to take.

“Don’t worry, though. The kids are only sending out orders you already finished! No brewing anything new,” he says, wagging his finger in that annoying way of his. “I’m a responsible adult, don’t you know?”

There are a million things Kento could say to that, but he decides it isn’t worth what little energy he has. Instead he turns to

Itadori, who's peering curiously at his smoking kitchen stove.

"What about school?" Kento asks. Surely the wizarding school doesn't allow truancy, even if they still employ Gojou Satoru every semester.

Itadori looks confused. "Nanamin, you were out for a while. School ended hours ago."

Kento frowns at that. Maybe his fever is worse than he'd imagined.

Peering up at him curiously, Itadori asks, "How are you feeling?" There's a gentle concern settled in the scrunch of his brows, and his small frown. It fills Kento with grief for being sick, and an intense gratitude for the boy in front of him.

"Worse, since Gojou-san arrived," Kento answers, not entirely untrue.

"*Nanami!*"

Itadori grins again, in that lightbeam way of his. It's almost too much for Kento's feverish state, his headache coming in waves.

"*Yuuji,*" Gojou whines, tired of being ignored. He drapes himself over Itadori's shoulders, not unlike some of Kento's more childish plants on dry, hot days. "Nanami won't let me cook anymore." *For good reason*, Kento thinks, glancing at the stove, two seconds away from catching fire. Itadori's eyes follow the direction of his gaze, and he seems to understand exactly what Kento is thinking.

"Leave it to me!" he says without prompting, and Gojou's grin widens at the same rate Kento's frown deepens. He's not sure how well Itadori will fare at cooking compared to Gojou Satoru. He's not sure he wants to find out.

"Sensei!" Comes a call from downstairs, and they all turn to see Kugisaki Nobara climbing up, her presence a sun flare in the walls of Kento's home. His house really isn't meant to hold so many people all at once. Kento's getting dizzy again. "Shoko-san is here. Says you called her."

Gojou claps his hands together. "Ah, perfect!" he exclaims, turning to Kugisaki. "Take care of Nanami for me, will ya?" Gojou moves away then, heading down to the shop.

Kugisaki looks at Kento. Kento looks at Kugisaki.

"You should be resting, Nanami-san," she says, hands ushering him towards the couch in the living space. Kento turns worriedly to the kitchen, where Itadori has already begun to rummage through the drawers.

"But—" he starts, but Kugisaki cuts him off.

"Itadori will be fine," she reassures, and something about her headstrong tone makes him think there's no point in arguing. He sits on the couch as instructed, and Kugisaki looks at him with her hands on her hips, grin shining and brilliant. "We're taking care of *you* now."

Kento sighs and sinks into the backrest. Kugisaki goes back to the kitchen to grab some water, and his eyes follow her; there he finds Itadori with the black-stained apron, mincing ingredients. He's taken some squash from Kento's mundane end of the garden— carrots, onions, and other (hopefully non-magical) ingredients Kento can't see clearly from where he's perched; Itadori looks almost at home, there in the kitchen of Kento's shophouse, hands more skilled at cooking than Kento had first imagined. It makes a strange warmth spread through him, something different from the fever heating his skin.

"Here," Kugisaki says, handing him a glass of water. Kento takes it gratefully, and the slide of liquid in his throat fills him with relief. In Kugisaki's other hand is the cloth from earlier, wet again. It feels cool against his skin when he takes it.

That reminds him. "Ah," Kento says, sitting up slightly. He looks around his green-filled home, leaves extending towards him full of longing. "My plants—"

"—Have been taken care of," Kugisaki says, almost bored as she sits beside him. She smooths down her skirt, though it's already pristine. "Fushiguro is weirdly good at that. They like him. I think they hate Gojou sensei, though."

"Oh," Kento says, deflating. He takes another sip of his water. "Yes, Gojou-san makes them bristle."

Kugisaki laughs at that, amused at Gojou's expense. It's a shining sound. Kento smiles with it.

"You didn't have to," Kento says, not talking about the drink, or the cloth, or even his plants. Kugisaki eyes him quietly, her gaze as piercing as the sunlight through the curtains. From the kitchen, a gentle smell wafts through the house, something that reminds

Kento of autumn, when his plants are more pliant and his shop exhales in the cooling air. It calms him, the scent. Kugisaki's eyes are still on him.

She shrugs, puts her chin in the palm of her hand. Kento wipes the cloth over the skin of his forearms, his nerves cooling beneath its touch. "Gojou sensei begged us to," she says, looking away to the kitchen where Itadori is humming softly by the stove. It sounds like one of those annoying pop songs on the radio that Kento would usually turn off. He doesn't mind it, now.

Kento nods in understanding, but then Kugisaki smiles something small, that softens her usual unyielding demeanor. This fits too in Kento's home— the gentle curve of it. "And besides," she says, quiet in the afternoon light, "you've helped us plenty before. Just relax and let us help you now."

She turns back to him, shrugs again. The gentle rise of her shoulder as she smiles makes Kento admit defeat.

Kento sinks further into the couch. He loathes to admit it, but— this is nice. Maybe his home can make room for a few extra bodies, every other day or so.

Gojou returns a bit later, with Fushiguro trailing behind him. The latter gives Kento a nod in greeting, and Kento manages a small smile. Gojou heads straight to the kitchen.

Itadori seems to be done, some kind of broth that smells heavenly held in his hands. Gojou approaches him, taking out a vial from his pocket, and Kento guesses it's from leiri; a healing potion, perhaps. In his other hand is a paper bag with the apothecary's logo on the front— Gojou had picked up his order of herbs for him. Kento's chest fills with unbearable warmth at the sight.

Before he realizes it, Kugisaki is ushering him to the dining table, a little too small for them all, where Fushiguro is setting the plates. They all grab some random chairs from his home, a mismatched assembly, and settle in their respective seats. Then, Itadori: in his hands a big bowl of what Kento guesses is butternut squash soup, from the smell of it; Gojou brings a plate of bread that Kento had baked sometime earlier this week to the table, and Kento's stomach growls without his permission.

Itadori serves the food to him first. It is, indeed, butternut squash soup, but the colour is different— swirling together with the dark, creamy yellow of the squash is a ripple of pastel blue, like a reflection of the sky opening in Kento's bowl. The healing potion. It almost sparkles, Kento thinks, like early autumn when the leaves begin to yellow under a brilliant sky. Kento murmurs his thanks, taking a spoon to the soup.

A burst of flavour fills his mouth, the soup silky and flavourful. Beneath the taste of butternut squash is a warmth Kento can't describe— the light of his shop in the early morning, on days Kento rises before his plants do; the feeling of bread baked to perfection after hours spent at work; the gentle kindness of the people around him, who quietly wait for him to eat before taking a bite themselves. Healing potions, the thing about them: there is more to recovery than some herbs and a good brew. Healing potions taste like the things that heal you. Kento didn't realize it would mean this, the warmth of his people, a kindness he isn't used to.

"Wah, this is amazing, Yuuji! You should open a restaurant," Gojou exclaims, obviously happy with the taste of the soup. Briefly Kento wonders what it would taste like for him, if they share the same brand of healing.

"Nanami-san would probably get food poisoning if sensei had cooked instead," Kugisaki comments, quietly taking a piece of bread. Gojou blanches, offended.

"Nobara!"

"What else would you expect from him?" Fushiguro interjects, ignoring the way Gojou glares at him, affronted. Itadori laughs at it all, the sound reverberating across the room, settling in the walls of Kento's once-empty home.

Kento smiles amidst the chatter. The afternoon light from the windows is gentle and forgiving, and his plants seem happier than they've ever been. Kento is filled with intense gratitude, and warmth. So, so much warmth.

"Thank you," he says, interrupting Gojou's indignant retort at Fushiguro's jab. The four of them turn to him; even Fushiguro manages a small smile, and the inside of Kento's home radiates with light.

"Of course, Nanami," Gojou answers, that strange, soft smile back on his mouth. "Anytime."





Yield 2 Loaves, Serves 4 each

Prep Time: 20 min

Total Time: 14 hr 20 min

STARTER INGREDIENTS

$\frac{3}{4}$ (180g) cup water

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp (a little less than 1g) instant yeast

$1\frac{1}{4}$ cup (150g) bread flour

DOUGH INGREDIENTS

$\frac{3}{4}$ tsp (2.5g) instant yeast

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (120g) water

All of the starter

$1\frac{1}{3}$ (180g) cup bread flour

1 Tbsp (13.3g) olive oil

3 tsp (20g) salt

Optional: chopped jalapenos ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup, 45g),

chopped bell peppers ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup, 42g),

chopped red onions ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup, 50g),

red pepper flakes (1 tsp)

TOPPING INGREDIENTS

1 Stick paneer cubed (1 cup, ~160g)

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup mozzarella cheese (grated, 170g)

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup swiss cheese (grated, 57g)

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup emmentaler (grated, 57g)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped green onion (50g)

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped mint (5g)

2 Cloves garlic

2 tsp black pepper (hand ground)

$\frac{1}{8}$ tsp chili powder (just a pinch)

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp turmeric (double the chili powder used)

$1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive oil

Garden Focaccia

Recipe by Snig

PREP (OVERNIGHT) DIRECTIONS - for an airier bread crumb

- 1) Mix starter ingredients together. Starter should have the consistency of a thick pancake dough. Set aside for exactly 12 hours.

DOUGH PREPARATION DIRECTIONS

- 1) Take all of the starter from overnight and add the water, oil and yeast to the mixture first. Follow with flour and salt.
- 2) Once the additional flour and yeast mixture begins to bind together, add in the chopped veggies if desired. Knead in a bowl until the ingredients are mixed and the dough is firm. This should take about ten minutes if kneading by hand and not more than five in a stand mixer.
- 3) Lightly flour a work surface and turn the dough out onto it.
- 4) Divide the dough into two equal portions and roll each portion out until it is about $\frac{1}{3}$ inch (little under 1cm) thick.
- 5) Beginning at one end, fold the dough into thirds and roll back out with the rolling pin
- 6) Cover the dough and let rest for 1 hour.
- 7) Preheat oven to 425F/220C.

TOPPINGS AND GARNISHES DIRECTIONS

- 1) Prepare toppings (see steps below).
- 2) Create dimples in the focaccia by pressing your fingers into the dough. Make deep dimples in the bread so that the oil collects in them.
- 3) Pour $\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive or herb oil from topping preparation on top of the bread.
- 4) Top with herbs, cheese, and veggies as desired. The amounts given are soft maximums.
- 5) Bake for 25-30 mins. You want to bake your loaf until the cheese is gooey and the outside of the focaccia is crispy for a decadent experience. The best way to do this is actually to add extra cheese in mid-bake, around the 20-23 minute mark.
- 6) Top with green onions, paneer, and mint after baking for an extra refreshing experience.

TOPPINGS DIRECTIONS

- 1) Cube Paneer into chunks about 2-3 cm square.
- 2) Add to the pan with olive oil and season with salt, chili powder and turmeric.
- 3) Stir fry until the outside of the paneer is crispy and coated in the seasoning
- 4) If you have any chopped veggies left over from the veggies used in dough preparation add them to the paneer.
- 5) Set the mixture aside to add after baking; it keeps the paneer crisp.
- 6) Dice garlic cloves and combine them with the grated ginger and ground black pepper.
- 7) Heat olive oil and infuse with your garlic-pepper mixture.
- 8) Strain and pour over toppings

ADLER_ERI



Ratio

By OnceABlueMoon

It's miserably hot inside Yaga-sensei's office. The sky outside the window is a blue so clear it almost hurts to look at, the sun burning at its highest point in the sky. Nanami sighs as he wipes the sweat off his brow. The aircon quit working again— the school building is ripe for refurbishing, but it will only happen over the summer break. Sadly, it isn't quite summer break yet.

Yaga drops Nanami's folder down on his desk with a thud. "So. I can either talk you through all the things you already know, the things you're doing great at, or address the glaring problem and help you with it. You choose."

Nanami might only be a first year, but he's jujutsu sorcerer enough to know that it's not a choice at all. Not if you want to survive out in the field. An end-of-the-year evaluation is the kind of thing that is life-or-death in a more literal way than it is for the average Japanese high schooler. Impatient to get it over with, Nanami taps the desk, the corners of his mouth turned down. "The problem would be preferable."

Lunch would be preferable, actually, but that was half an hour ago.

Yaga nods. "Thought so." Steepling his fingers together, he looks at Nanami over the top of his glasses, his eyes serious. "You've shown exemplary understanding of the theory. That's not the problem. In fact, I think your difficulties with channeling cursed power stems from an entirely different issue. You, Nanami Kento, need more experience visualizing."

Nanami frowns. "Visualizing?"

"Yes, your summer assignment is learning how to visualise your cursed power. I personally imagine I fill my dolls with all things cute, like a golden glow slipping out of my fingertips and flowing over them from head to toe until they're under my control. This won't work for you of course— there's nary a sorcerer who uses the same technique— but something similar could."

Barely keeping himself from making a face at the comment about his teacher's dolls, Nanami can't help but be disappointed about the extra work. Summer assignments— truly the bane of his existence. Isn't it enough that they keep him busy the rest of the year? When he's older, he'll never work overtime like that. "Any suggestions on how to do that?"

Yaga raises an eyebrow. "You've got a knife, don't you? Go chop. If you need somewhere to start, the student dorm's supply for the baths is running low."

Nanami can't *wait* until the traditional baths requiring wood to actually be burnt outside will be replaced. He hopes they're the first to go with the renovations.

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Being outside does not improve the temperature. Nanami sighs as he raises the axe to chop more wood. The trees behind the communal bathroom building lent precious little shade. It's hard, trying to concentrate on his technique when sweat is dripping down his back, his shirt drenched.

It doesn't help that he's pretty sure he has a sunburn too. Wiping the sweat out of his eyes, he sighs, putting the axe down. The damp fabric of his shirt clings to his skin.

Chopping. Visualize chopping, Yaga had said.

Ugh, Nanami wants to go back *inside*.

Maybe the gym would work better? Wood's so still anyway, a moving target would probably make it easier to visualize...

Yeah, that's it. That's his excuse. He's chopped enough wood anyway. Effort without results is nearly as inane as overtime—Nanami's not wasting his time on it.

• • • • •

The gym is so large that Nanami hears the thud of Haibara's knives long before he spots him. He's practicing, his eyes trained on the targets placed on the wall especially for him. Nanami likes watching Haibara train. Out of all the faces Haibara shows, this is by far the most intimidating one. He looks like a bird of prey, with the way he gets all eagle-eyed, his normally wide, passionate eyes narrowed down to one single target. When he throws, his other arm is behind him as if mimicking a wing.

There's something breathtaking about that. A show of skill Nanami can appreciate. Something he'd like to try, something that might help. It certainly helped Haibara with *his* cursed technique. Nanami doesn't see why it wouldn't help him.

He steps forward. "Mind lending me one?"

Haibara jumps, so startled he drops his knife dangerously near his foot. "My goodness, don't sneak up on me!"

Nanami gives him a look. "Because curses are going to wait until you're done throwing knives at their companions before they get you from behind."

Haibara pouts. "Can't we celebrate my accomplishments? My cursed technique is coming along pretty well!"

Yes. *Haibara's* technique is. The corners of Nanami's mouth turn down. "Mind helping me with mine?"

Haibara's eyes widen, his mouth dropping open. "The master himself asking *me* to help?" He grins. "Tell me, what can I do for you?" "Teach me how to throw knives."

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"Somehow," Haibara says about half an hour later, "I didn't think that when you asked me to help you to throw knives, you meant as a living target."

"Don't be stupid," Nanami says, eyeing the way Haibara stands stock still. "I'm trying *not* to hit you. That's the whole point."

Haibara waves him away just as Nanami throws another knife. It only doesn't hit him because he snatches his hand back towards his body right at the last moment. "I think you're doing really well, especially for a beginner! But—" another knife flies towards him, Haibara only just ducking out of the way. "I don't think this is overly productive. Are you sure you're visualizing it right?"

Nanami glowers at him. "It's *your* knives not doing the job. I'm visualizing the ratio point of seven to three perfectly well."

His stomach grumbles.

Haibara laughs. "I think I know why you're so grumpy. Let's try one more time and then start on dinner?"

"Fine," Nanami takes aim. "I might as well try chopping vegetables."

Haibara claps in his hands excitedly. "Awesome! You made a focaccia starter last night, didn't—" *thud*. "...Nanami, please don't tell me that was my hair."

Nanami, quite tellingly, keeps his mouth shut.

• • • • •

Nanami's still kneading the dough when Gojou throws open the kitchen door.

"There are my cute underclassmen!" he twirls before spotting Haibara sitting at the kitchen table, playing with his hair. Gojou

stops spinning, lowering his glasses to get a better look. “What happened to *you*?”

Haibara gives him a weak smile. “Nanami was trying out throwing knives to see if they would help him with the chop visualization, but...” He reaches up, playing with the uneven locks and giving them a considering look. “The only thing choppy in the gym ended up being my hair.” He turns back to Gojou. “What do you think, can I set a new trend?”

Gojou pats him on the cheek. “If it’s you... Of course not!”

And then, as if being his usual dickish self is not enough reason to ban him from the kitchen, Gojou turns to Nanami. “What’s this I hear about chopping visualization practice? If you’re supposed to do that then why are you kneading~”

Knowing the only way to deal with Gojou’s needling is to remain firm and use leverage, Nanami gives him a flat look. “Do you want homemade focaccia with your dinner or do you just want a fistful of dough and two tomatoes?”

The joys of being the cook for the night are great at times.

Gojou gasps. “You wouldn’t do that to Haibara!”

“I can give Haibara bread and not give you any, it’s not like it’s bread for all or bread for none.”

“You wouldn’t!”

“I will, unless you go make yourself useful.”

Gojou pouts but makes his way to the kitchen counter. Nanami immediately blocks his path. “You’re *not* helping me with the cooking, I’ve seen you in the kitchen. No thanks.” He hands him a pair of scissors. “Go even out Haibara’s hair.”

Gojou drags his feet while he’s at it, but the minute he’s actually behind Haibara, he starts cutting with relish. “Oopsie!” he says, as he evens the side out perfectly. “That went wrong, let me try again. Oh no!”

Haibara cranes his neck, but trying to see his own hair without a mirror is a lost cause. “Please tell me you’re not making it worse.”

Gojou, still cutting it expertly, giggles. “Please bear with me, I promise I’ll get the hang of it soon!”

Haibara looks increasingly worried.

Nanami shakes his head. Pretending he’s bad at it while doing a meticulous job, just to scare Haibara. Classic Gojou.

Covering up the bowl to let it rise, he washes his hands and starts on the vegetables. Cutting board, chef knives, tomatoes, a jar of olives, and some cheese all neatly lined up. He enjoys this part of the process, the neatness, the way everything he needs is in sight and perfectly ordered. Gojou and Haibara’s chatter quickly become pleasant background noise as he washes the tomatoes and starts chopping.

It’s surprisingly easy like this, to imagine a weak spot at the ratio point of seven to three. Even though he’s sinking into the process, relaxing after a long day, the cursed energy is constantly at the ready. Nanami smiles as he gets deeper into the flow. Vegetable, ratio, chop. Vegetable, ratio, chop. Vegetable, ratio, chop.

Before he knows it, everything has been cut and it’s time to get the dough out of the bowl and get all the toppings on there. The oven’s hot when he opens it to slide the focaccias in there, but it’s fine.

As he tidies up, Shoko and Getou filter in too. The third years aren’t here today— their graduation ceremony took place earlier and they’ve likely gone out to eat with their families. Nanami doesn’t mind— feeding these four bottomless pits is hard enough already.

He pops the focaccias out of the oven and puts them on the table. Licking her lips, Shoko starts cutting it into slices quickly. Haibara’s too eager and burns his hand attempting to pick one up before it’s cooled off. “Ouch!”

Gojou laughs at him, “Can’t believe you just did that!”

But then promptly does the same, making Getou laugh so hard he clutches his stomach. “Your *face*!”

Nanami shakes his head as he sits down.

Everyone digs in with gusto. Satisfied to see all of them basically attacking his food, Nanami has to admit that maybe Yaga was right. This method of training does work. He even enjoyed it, once it finally worked out.

There’s no way he’s telling Yaga that, though. Not ever.

Decisively, he takes a bite out of his focaccia. It really *is* delicious.





Nonstandard Champagne Fondue

Recipe by Sasu

Ingredients

2 cloves of garlic, grated or pureed in a food processor/blender
1 shallot, grated or pureed in a food processor/blender
1 Tbsp/8g flour
1.5 cup/355ml brut champagne or dry sparkling wine
8 oz/226g shredded gruyere
8 oz/226g shredded emmentaler
8 oz/226g shredded sharp cheddar
2 tsp/4g mustard powder
2 tsp/4g ginger powder
large pinch of ground nutmeg
large pinch of ground pepper
10-12 black olives, roughly chopped
Preferred foods for dipping
(recommendations: crusty bread cut into bite size cubes, cured meats such as salami and spanish chorizo, sliced green apples, cherry tomatoes, radishes)

Serves 4-6 people

Prep Time: 5 min

Total Time: 10 min

Directions

- 1) In a saucepan, whisk together the champagne, garlic, shallot, and flour over medium high heat until lumps are gone and champagne starts to boil, about 2-3 minutes.
- 2) Lower the heat to medium low and add the cheese a handful at a time, whisking the entire time. Wait until the cheese is completely melted before adding the next handful.
- 3) When all the cheese has been incorporated (about 5 minutes), add the mustard powder, ginger powder, nutmeg, and pepper. Whisk for an additional 2-3 minutes until the cheese is creamy and smooth.
- 4) Pour the hot cheese into a fondue pot or ceramic/enamel pot warmed over a tealight.
- 5) Sprinkle the chopped olives over the surface of the fondue.
- 6) Serve with accompaniments of choice and the same wine used in the fondue if desired.
- 7) Enjoy and don't forget to stir your fondue as you eat!!





Ragtag Family

By Magnus Tesla

Kento isn't sure when it began, the way people started to gravitate towards him like he was the sun, pulling others into his orbit. At first he had expected Itadori and his peers to go running for the hills when met with Kento's brusque and honest attitude. To his surprise, the bluntness only encouraged the kids to seek him out time and time again. Kento could hardly blame them— the only other mentor in their lives acted more like a hyperactive teen on a constant sugar rush than a responsible adult of 28.

This is how Kento finds himself in the kitchen with Itadori, helping him to cook a Sunday roast while Fushiguro and Kugisaki sit quietly in the lounge watching films.

The soft light from the television casts a glow into the kitchen, and despite the early hour— it's just after 4pm— the sun has already begun to set, deep oranges and red and purples shifting to an even deeper blue of the night sky.

Over by the sink, Itadori peels sweet potatoes with just as much effort as he does fighting cursed spirits, fast and effective. Kento can't help the small smile that twitches up at the corner of his mouth, fondness for the boy he's come to care for growing like ivy and pushing through the cracks of the wall around his heart.

Itadori spins on the heel of his foot and bounces over to the worktop next to Kento, letting the potatoes tumble onto the chopping board.

"Do we really need this many sweet potatoes, Nanamin? Seems like an awful lot."

Kento raises an eyebrow, looks at Itadori's confused face and says, "you seem to have forgotten that I've seen how much you eat."

Itadori blushes at that, turning back to the chopping board and begins to dice the potatoes.

"Not to mention, you are a growing child, and a sorcerer at that. It is important to eat well and look after your body."

"I know that, Nanamin. You keep telling me."

"And I'll keep repeating that fact until you start eating properly. And no, what Gojou feeds you does not qualify as a proper diet."

As if summoned by his name, the apartment door opens, followed by a bitterly cold gust of wind and the jingle of keys being dropped into a glass bowl.

The door then slams shut, and with it comes the migraine-made-flesh, Gojou Satoru, calling out, "honey I'm home!"

Kento doesn't react, instead seasoning the beef with black pepper and placing it in a roasting pan along with the diced sweet potato and other root vegetables.

"What'cha cooking today, Nanami?" Gojou asks, chin resting on Kento's shoulder.

"One pan roast beef with root vegetables."

“And yorkshire pudding?” The excitement in Gojou’s voice is almost palpable.

“Yes, and yorkshire pudding. When have I ever forgotten?”

Someone softly clears their throat, and it’s then that Kento remembers they have an audience. Itadori fidgets on the spot, wringing his hands together before blurting out, “I didn’t know you were dating.”

Gojou laughs, moving away to fix himself up some sweet monstrosity of a drink. “Oh Yuuji, you’re too cute!” He calls through to the lounge, asking Fushiguro and Kugisaki if they want a drink, to which he receives dual grunts, presumably a yes. He disappears from the kitchen, a glass in each hand, leaving Kento with a very confused looking Itadori.

How very like Gojou to suddenly find something else to occupy himself with, leaving Kento to explain their relationship. Kento slots the pepper mill back in the herb rack, then pinches the bridge of his nose. “We are not dating.”

Itadori frowns, cocking his head to the side like a curious owl. “But you live together?”

“Yes, we live together. Though, that does not mean we are dating. Our relationship is purely platonic.”

“What he said,” Gojou says, finally reappearing in the kitchen with a glass of whisky in hand. “You need to refill the drinks cabinet, Nanami! You’re almost out of your favourite whisky.”

Kento takes the proffered drink and takes a large gulp, enjoying the way the whisky burns at first, before settling into a pleasant warmth that spreads through his limbs.

“What about dating other people? Isn’t that weird living—”

This time Gojou cuts Itadori off, laughing and gesturing wildly with his hands. “We’re both way too aroace for any funny business like that!”

“Aro... ace?” Itadori slowly turns the words over in his mouth, looking more confused than ever.

“Aromantic and asexual!” Kugisaki yells from the lounge. “Geez, get with the times you country bumpkin.”

Finally, it sinks in, Itadori’s eyes lighting up as everything clicks into place. “Oh! I get it now. But, that doesn’t explain why you live together.” Itadori pauses for a moment, hand coming up to his chin and lips pursed in thought. “Does work as a sorcerer pay that badly?”

Kento almost chokes on his whisky, and Gojou bursts into laughter, clapping Kento hard on the back. “Nanami here just couldn’t do without my glorious company.”

Glorious company my ass, Kento thinks.

“He burnt down his kitchen trying to cook.” Nanami gulps down the rest of his drink, and continues, “so he moved in here temporarily, then never left.”

“Aww Nanami, you make it sound much worse than it was. There was only a little bit of smoke damage.”

“You almost set fire to the entire apartment complex,” Nanami says, deadpan.

Gojou waves him off, “details, details.”

Kento still remembers the day that Gojou wound up on his doorstep, pale skin and ice-white hair having turned grey from smoke and soot. With a sheepish grin on his face, Gojou had asked to stay for a few weeks while his kitchen was repaired. Those weeks turned into months, and months turned into years, Gojou slotting into Kento’s life in an easy companionship, as though he’d always been there.

“Nanamin, the light’s gone out on the oven,” Itadori says, already passing Kento the oven gloves.

Sprinkling some cracked salt over the joint of beef and ensuring it’s seasoned properly, Kento slides the pan into the pre-heated oven.

“Tch, such a waste of good meat.”

Kento and Gojou whip their heads around to the source of the voice, just as Itadori slaps his cheek. “Ah, sorry about that. Sukuna likes to give unwanted commentary whenever I cook.”

A mouth and single eye appear on Itadori’s other cheek. “That’s because you spoil it with all your *cooking* nonsense. Meat should be enjoyed fresh and raw and tender.”

Itadori goes to slap himself again, but Gojou snags his hand, holding it away. “No one asked you Sukuna. Goodnight~!” With

a simple tap against Itadori's cheek, Kento watches as Gojou forces the curse back into wherever it is that Sukuna resides inside Itadori's body. "If he keeps bothering you, let sensei know, yeah?"

"Thanks, Gojou-sensei."

Gojou smiles softly, ruffles Itadori's hair. "You're most welcome."

It feels as though his heart may just burst, so Kento looks away, tucking another new fond memory behind his ribcage for safekeeping.

"Can we go watch the rest of The Two Towers with Kugisaki and Fushiguro?" Itadori asks, practically bouncing on the spot. "I set the timer already!"

"Yeah, c'mon Nanami," Gojou whines, linking their arms together to drag him into the lounge. "I've had a hard day and I need to put my feet up."

• • • • •

Kento wakes with a jolt to the sound of the kitchen timer beeping. He rubs his eyes registers the time on the wall clock, cursing under his breath, "shit, the yorkshire puddings—"

"Are already in the oven." Gojou hovers over him, hand outstretched and tugs Kento up off the sofa. "Yuuji poured your mixture into the tins and put them in for the last 25 minutes."

"Thank you." Kento goes with the movement, stretching his hands above his head, relishing in the way his joints all pop and crack with the movement. "Where are the kids?"

"Grabbing all the plates and cutlery for the table. I told them that if they expected you to feed them, then the least they could do was lay the table. And, before you say anything, I did not have a hand in any of the cooking, so you don't need to worry your pretty little head." Gojou pokes his tongue out, then wanders off to help the kids set the table properly.

The kitchen is still in one piece, not a single scorch mark anywhere, and Kento lets go of the breath he didn't know he'd been holding. When Gojou had first moved in, he'd tried to be "helpful" with cooking, his efforts resulting in several small stovetop fires. Somehow the man had even managed to set fire to a pan of boiling water, and it was at that point Kento set down the one and only rule for living together— Gojou was *never* to cook, nor help with cooking, ever.

Turning the temperature dial to zero, Kento opens the oven door, carefully slides the pan of roast beef and vegetables onto the worktop, then grabs the yorkshire puddings. With practiced movements, he stacks the yorkshire puddings onto a large plate, only for Fushiguro to suddenly appear— seemingly out of the shadows— mumble out a thanks, and vanish with the plate.

In the other room Kento can hear Kugisaki squawking at Itadori and Gojou for scoffing down the yorkshires. "It's rude to start eating before everyone else, y'know? Ugh, you're both such uncivilized slob."

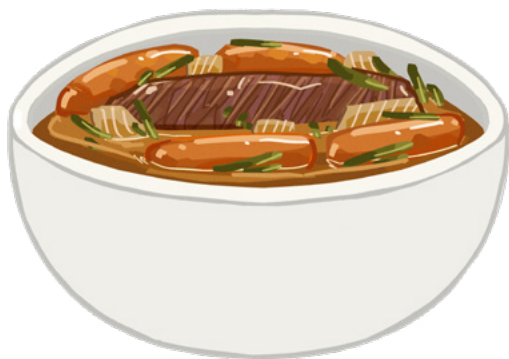
Kento snorts, then works efficiently using his ratio technique to create a weak spot at 7:3, over and over, cutting the beef into neat, equal slices. The technique comes to him as easily as breathing, an action born of hard work, honing his cursed energy to a fine blade sharp enough to cut through anything.

The childish bickering in the background is all too familiar, and Kento's mind wanders, delving into old memories much like one would looking through a dusty old box of childhood mementos. Using his cursed technique hadn't always been so simple; back when Kento had been barely 15, all long limbs and no finesse, he'd struggled to get a grip on his technique. Under Yaga's advice, Kento had tried various suggestions, from chopping wood with an axe, through to throwing knives (which resulted in Haibara losing chunks of his hair and getting an impromptu haircut from Gojou).

But the thing that had worked best was chopping vegetables, a simple yet effective way to visualise his technique, and from that sparked a newfound love for cooking that followed Kento into adulthood.

Satisfied with his handiwork, he slides the oven gloves back on and carries the one-pan dish to the dining table.

Kento isn't sure when it began, the way people had started to gravitate towards him, but looking at his odd ragtag family sitting around the dining table, he wouldn't have it any other way.



Roast Curse Beast

Recipe by thechaoscriptid

Serves 5 people
Prep Time: 40 min
Total Time: ~9 hrs

Bread Ingredients

4 lb beef chuck roast
Salt
2 Tbsp onion powder
2 Tbsp garlic powder
1.5 Tbsp black pepper, ground
2 Tbsp salted butter
2 medium yellow onions, diced
1 lb baby carrots
6 stalks celery, diced
8 cloves garlic, crushed
3.25 cup low sodium beef broth
3 Tbsp apple cider vinegar
4 sprigs fresh rosemary
4 sprigs fresh thyme
1 Bay leaf
3 Tbsp salted butter (optional for gravy)
3 Tbsp white flour (optional for gravy)

Directions

- 1) Set chuck roast onto a baking sheet. Season all sides liberally with salt (about 1 tablespoon) and let rest at room temperature for one hour.
- 2) Mix onion powder, garlic powder, and ground black pepper in a small ramekin. When the beef is well-rested, pat down with a paper towel and rub all sides with seasoning mixture (there may be some left over).
- 3) In a large pan (cast iron preferred, but not necessary), melt 2 T. salted butter over high heat. Sear roast on each side until well-browned (about four minutes per side). Transfer meat to crock pot.
- 4) Deglaze meat pan with .25 c. beef broth and 3 T. apple cider vinegar. Add onion, carrot, celery, and garlic to pan. Cook on medium high heat until lightly browned around the edges (about 8 minutes). Spoon veggies and remaining liquid evenly over the roast in crock pot.
- 5) Add remaining beef broth, rosemary, thyme, and bay leaf. It's all right if the liquid doesn't cover the meat and vegetables. Roast on low heat for 7 hours, then increase heat to high and cook 1 more hour. When the meat falls apart when touched, it's finished!
- 6) **OPTIONAL:** Before serving, melt 3 T. salted butter in a saucepan over medium high heat. Add 3 T. flour and cook until bubbly and golden. Slowly add 2 c. of the cooking liquid, whisking constantly until a gravy is formed.





Sift Through These Cinders

By shara

The sand underneath his feet is warm, a welcome contrast to the water lapping at his ankles. It gleams on the horizon, warm yellow from the dying rays of the sun mixing seamlessly with the blue of the ocean, reflecting the pink and orange streaked across the sky. To anybody else, it would have been a breathtaking sight.

The thing about eight year olds, though, is that they're much too content with themselves to pay much attention to nature, much less engage in its flattery. Not to mention, Yuuji has spent the entirety of those eight years of his life up until now right here in this small, seaside village, watching the same sand and ocean and trees and sunset, the same people catching the same kind of fish and selling them in the same markets, day in and day out. At some point, the wondrous inevitably becomes the commonplace and slots itself neatly into daily life.

Seashells, in Yuuji's opinion, are different. Each one has its own array of colours, patterned on the outside and iridescent on the inside. They're unique in a way few other things are, and yet similar enough that collecting them means something—to Yuuji more than most.

Case in point, the one he just picked up after chasing it all the way into knee deep water with the waves is bluish green on the outside with alternating bands of powdery white in between. It's slightly chipped on one side but it's his most vibrant find of the day, so he holds on to it tightly as he wades back to the shore, dusts it off and carefully puts it in his satchel.

Looking up at the horizon, he frowns. The sun is only halfway to setting, but darkness is falling quicker than it should, and it's only when he hears a clap of thunder that he turns around to look—there are clouds rolling in from the east, black and heavy. Yuuji huffs. He really doesn't like this kind of weather, these unpredictable spells that come out of nowhere. His village always gets these in late Augusts. The rain makes it impossible to go out and the thunder is always so loud that it scares him.

"Itadori!" calls out a voice, and Yuuji whips around to see Fushiguro waving to him from a few feet away. Kugisaki is standing beside him, using all her might to hold on to a bucket full of what he assumes is sea trout. No way she caught them all herself, Yuuji thinks in wonder—did Fushiguro help her? But he never helps Yuuji! He's—

"Let's go home," Fushiguro calls out to him. "There's a storm gathering."

"In a minute!" he calls back before turning back around. He just needs one more blue shell to make it a total of fifteen today. That should count as a fair haul for one day.

"Hurry up, dumbass! We don't have time!" That's Kugisaki. "If you drown, I'm not coming back to drag you out."

Yuuji huffs. "In a minute!"

He really should get going, it's time for his grandfather's evening medicine, anyway. But the shells are important, they're *really* important and—

A clap of thunder roars above him, and with a quiet *pat, pat, pat* for a couple of seconds, the rain starts coming down in sheets. "Shit!" Yuuji mutters to himself, then frowns immediately because his grandpa wouldn't like that now, would he? He gathers his stuff as fast as he can, putting one hand over his forehead to keep the rain from getting into his eyes.

It doesn't do much good because by the time he turns around, he can barely see anything. The place where Fushiguro and Kugisaki stood just moments ago is now just a haze of grey and brown. A wave of trepidation overtakes Yuuji. It's pretty clear he's not going home, for now, at least. He tamps down the panic rising in his throat. *Focus.* What was it again that his grandpa told him to do if he ever got lost? *Find the nearest person and ask for help.* Well, clearly, that isn't happening. So, he goes for the next nearest thing.

It takes five minutes of walking blindly through the rain and the sand against eyes, guided purely by intuition and a vague memory of having been here once before, but he makes it to the cabin, set some distance away from the shore, secluded and deeper into the wilderness. It's decent in size, an imposing structure that the village people always tell their children to stay away from. He doesn't really know why; he's seen the man who lives there, he seems nice enough. Well, he doesn't really talk much and keeps mostly to himself, grows his own food and makes his own stuff, only comes out about once a week to either go fishing with the adults or buy supplies from the farmers' market and is... kind of intimidating if Yuuji is being honest with himself. But surely he won't leave him out here in the storm, soaked to the bone and all by himself, right? Right?

He knocks, once, twice, thrice, the rain beating down mercilessly onto him. He's about to knock a fourth time when the door opens, creaking on the hinges.

The man is... taller than he remembers, with gaunt, angular features and eyes so *tired* that Yuuji almost feels bad for disturbing him—almost, if it weren't for the whole soaked to the bone and freezing to death till morning situation he had going on. The tired eyes widen the moment they take stock of him and the man immediately steps aside, letting him out of the rain and into the warmth of the cabin.

Once inside though, the man gives him a skeptical, if slightly confused, look as he takes in his small, shivering form. "Who are you, kid?"

Yuuji shoots up straighter. "I-I'm Itadori Yuuji, sir! I'm eight years old and I live in the fishing village! I got... stuck out there in the rain."

The man looks down at him over his nose and blinks slowly. There's a bone-deep kind of weariness in his eyes, nestled deep into the angles of his face, and Yuuji suddenly wishes he wasn't dripping water all over the wood floors of the man's house—at least that would be some weight off of his shoulders. He seems to have a lot of that, for some reason.

But he doesn't seem to be looking at the water at all, or at the sand Yuuji has tracked inside. Instead, he gives the entirety of his shivering form one long look and sighs. "Come on, there's a fire in the hearth. I'll get you some towels."

Yuuji gapes at him at first but then nods eagerly and does as he's told. His grandpa always tells him to leave his shoes at the genkan but this strange house doesn't have a genkan, so he settles for just taking them off and leaving them in the corner to dry. He clutches his satchel tighter to his chest as he enters.

Five minutes later finds him sitting in the living room in a comfy wooden chair big enough to hold two of him. There is indeed a fire going in the hearth, and between that, the removal of his soaked jacket and the dry towel around his shoulders, he has almost stopped shivering.

The man returns from somewhere inside with another towel and absently drops it on Yuuji's head. Yuuji scrambles with it for a few seconds before he manages to uncover his face. "Thank you, sir, you're very kind."

The man gives him a cursory nod. "Nanami."

"Nanami-san." Yuuji blinks, testing the cadence of the word on his tongue. There's something wrong with it, somehow, but he can't quite put his finger on it. (Nanami. Nanami-san. Nami-san? Nanamin. Ah, that sounds bet—) He shakes his head. "I'm sorry about all the dirt and the water on your floors. I can help clean it up if you want."

Nanami tilts his head slightly, as if in thought, then sits down on the even larger wooden chair beside Yuuji's, placed a considerable distance away from the fire. He leans slightly forward, elbows balanced on his knees. "Itadori Yuuji, was it?" Yuuji nods. "You apologize an awful lot for an eight-year-old brat."

Yuuji gawks at him for a second, considers apologizing yet again, then reconsiders. *Be a good boy, Yuuji, don't make trouble for others.* Did his grandpa say that? Or was it one of his parents? They're both dead now, but his mother did use to talk to him a lot, after all, right up until she couldn't. His father, though, his voice is the only thing Yuuji can remember at this point.

In any case, it all blends together at some point, all the things his elders have told him and keep telling him. *Be a good boy, Yuuji, and don't make trouble. Help other people, don't be selfish, don't take up too much time, don't take up too much space, do this,*

not that... And on and on and on.

"I'm... not a brat," is all he finally manages to say.

Nanamin smiles at that, just a small upward quirk of his lips but it's enough for Yuuji to register it, and his heart lightens a little.

They end up having tea in front of the fire. "I'd offer you hot chocolate but I don't have any," Nanamin had said with a wry smile. "I don't mind," Yuuji had replied. Of course, he doesn't mind; he's just glad to be out of the rain and have something warm in his hands, even if it tastes bland and bitter and slightly like those things his grandpa makes for him when he's sick.

There's a wooden bookshelf built into the east wall of the room. It's huge, spanning almost from the floor to the ceiling, and filled more than three-fourths of the way with an assortment of books, from crisp, pristine hardbacks to ancient leather bound pieces probably on the brink of falling apart. It captures Yuuji's attention; most people in the village are not even literate, much less so well-read.

"Have you read all of these books, Nanami-san?" he asks, unable to restrain his curiosity.

"Multiple times."

"Really!?" Yuuji stares, eyes wide with wonder, looking back and forth between him and the bookshelf. "But don't you get bored? Reading the same books over and over again, I mean."

Nanamin shrugs. "A good book is always good," he says. "Besides, I like to go through books leisurely, page by page." There's a faraway look to his eyes, even as he swirls the tea around in his ceramic tumbler with practiced dexterity. "Kind of like taking back the time I've lost."

"Lost how?"

He stills for a moment and squints slightly at nothing in particular, as if confused by his own words. "I'm not... sure, honestly."

Weird, but nothing remarkable—adults can be really incomprehensible at times, Yuuji knows this from experience. (Upon asking Nanamin why, despite the cold, he doesn't sit closer to the fire, he was met with, "I have a slight... aversion to mankind's greatest gift, I'm afraid.") Needless to say, Yuuji had filed it away in the 'ponder over later' folder—which is getting fuller by the minute.)

In any case, collecting seashells is a much more interesting hobby than reading books, in his opinion.

When he says as much to Nanami, the man almost smiles. "Is that what it is in that satchel of yours? Seashells that you've been protecting with your life?"

Yuuji defensively pulls the satchel closer to himself. "These are very precious, you know?"

"Are they, now?"

He nods solemnly, and then, because he's only eight and not the kind to hold grudges, lights up as he pulls out some of the shells to show to Nanamin. "I collected these ones just today! That makes a total of..." he starts counting on his fingers, "...ninety-seven blue shells in total."

"That's a lot of shells."

Yuuji frowns. "It's not nearly enough."

Nanamin takes a cautious sip of his tea. "Enough for what?"

Yuuji opens his mouth, then closes it again, not quite sure how to go about it. Mostly, when he tells anyone why he's so intent on collecting these shells, they brush him off, maybe ruffle his hair a bit and chalk it up to childish fancy.

But then again, Nanamin *had* asked, and there hadn't been anything patronizing in his voice.

"Nanami-san," he begins quietly, fiddling with a shell in his hands. "Have you lived here long?" He gets a non-committal nod in response, as if to say *yes, no, yes, does it matter?* It doesn't, not really, but he continues all the same. "There's an old legend in the village that the elders often tell. They say that if you collect exactly eleven hundred seashells of the rarest kind and present it up to the gods as an offering, they'll grant you one wish."

As he speaks, he scans Nanami's face carefully for any signs of that specific brand of patronizing smugness that all adults seem to carry. A look that says *my god, you are so stupid it turns right back to cute*. He *hates* that look more than anything.

All he finds on this man's face, though, is relaxed attention. So, he continues. "Well, my grandpa always tells me to help people, you know? Help people as much as you can, help those who are weaker, those who are in need." His fingers, still frigid from the rain and looking for a respite, wrap tightly around the tea in his own hands. "But... grandpa has been very sick lately." *There it is*, he thinks, *I said it*; unsurprisingly, that doesn't make it any more or less real. People die of sickness in the village all the time, it's not even anything remarkable. His mother, Fushiguro's mother, both of Tsumiki-san's parents.

And yet, somehow, Yuuji had always assumed his grandpa was invincible; foolish in hindsight, but he had always seemed that way. "I collect seashells because I want to start by helping him." Yuuji looks up, resolute—and then all of a sudden feels very insignificant. He frowns. "Do... do you think, if I collect enough seashells and ask for my grandpa's health, the gods will listen to me?"

Nanamin looks at him for a moment, then seems to think about his question for a long while. There is a contemplative knit to his eyebrows, visible even through the steam from the tea curling up in front of his face. Finally, he sighs a little. "Does it really matter if the gods listen to you?"

Startled, Yuuji is just about to shoot back something frantic when he holds up a hand in a placating gesture. "Hear me out." He takes a sip of his tea. "Your grandpa's right, it's a good thing to help people, of course. What is not a good thing is to put a 'required' label on it."

"I see," Yuuji replies solemnly, putting a hand to his chin in an overtly pensive gesture. "I don't get it."

Nanami sighs. "Look at it like this. While helping people is a good thing, you don't *have* to help a certain number of people or do a certain number of good deeds before you're allowed to just... be. You're just a child, Itadori-kun, it's the adults' duty to protect you. You don't have to use 'helping people' as some vague, nebulous measure in order to justify your existence."

There's a heavy, porous silence after the words are out. Something has been said, Yuuji is aware of that much, something important, something he's not just supposed to brush aside and dismiss as incomprehensible adult lingo. He's not quite sure what to do with it.

"Ah, shit," Nanami groans, tilting his head up towards the ceiling. "You're a child, I said it myself, I can't expect you to understand this just yet. Just—" he shakes his head and looks back at Yuuji. "Try your best, Itadori-kun, and no matter what the outcome, I'm sure your grandfather will be very proud of you, gods or no gods."

Yuuji stares at him. There is a peculiar sort of expression on Nanamin's face, clear even in the dim light. It's very reassuring, somehow, and so, he nods vigorously.

He's just about to speak when his stomach growls, loud and demanding, and for the first time that evening, Nanamin actually laughs.

They cook sukiyaki together. Yuuji is in charge of the rice, Nanami in that of everything else. There's a certain finesse to the way he works, and Yuuji can't help but be mesmerized as he watches him chop the vegetables into fine, evenly sliced pieces and slide them off the board and into the pan. He wonders for a moment just what it was that Nanamin used to do for a living. Maybe he's a chef. Or a woodcutter. Or a sculptor, or a koto-maker, perhaps? Something to do with his hands, surely.

He forgets about this dilemma soon enough, however, because the moment the aroma hits, Yuuji's mouth begins to water.

The kotatsu is broken (has been broken for a while now, Nanamin tells him. He's been meaning to get it fixed; perhaps he'll finally go out for it tomorrow), so they eat beside the fire, snuggled into the chairs with big earthen bowls that fit comfortably in their laps. The storm hasn't passed yet but with his clothes now dry and the food warming him from the inside out, Yuuji feels almost content enough to fall asleep.

He doesn't, however, and by the time the clouds begin to clear, the first rays of the sun are already breaking out from over the horizon.

Bowing to Nanami at the door, he beams brightly as he straightens up. "I'll come visit you again, Nanami-san! And this time, I'll even bring Fushiguro and Kugisaki along! I'll tell them you make amazing food." He hikes his satchel higher up his shoulder and turns, nodding to himself. "I bet they've never seen so many books at once."

He turns and waves back at Nanami, and then one more time for good measure until he's sure that Nanami has waved back at least faintly.

It isn't until he's almost halfway home that he realizes that Nanamin might not know who Fushiguro and Kugisaki are, and it isn't until he makes it almost all the way home that he realizes that his satchel now somehow has one more shell than he started with.





Grilled Octopus with Lemon- Potatoes and Sesame Grissini

Recipe by Vic

Serves 4 people
Total Time: 30-90 min

Octopus Ingredients

1 octopus
1-2 lemons, untreated
1 onion
Garlic (leaves, if fresh garlic is available,
otherwise 2 cloves)
2 sticks of celery
(Any “sad” vegetables from your fridge
that want to be used up)

Potatoes Ingredients

10 potatoes, hard boiling
3-4 lemons, untreated
1 bunch of parsley
4 Tbsp olive oil or butter
1 Tbsp miso

Grissini Ingredients

225g/1 cup wheat flour
25g/1 oz semolina
15g/.5 oz yeast
125 ml/.5 cup (warm) water
2 Tbsp olive oil
1 tsp salt
1 tsp sugar
Sesame (for decoration)

Dressing Ingredients

2 Tbsp gochujang paste
1 Tbsp honey
1 Dash rice vinegar
Warm water

DIRECTIONS

- 1) Grissini: Mix warm water and yeast with a pinch of flour and sugar. Set mixture aside for 15 minutes or until yeast is activated. Meanwhile, mix the remaining ingredients in a large bowl. Then combine both and knead the dough until it is smooth. (Optional: Work the sesame seeds into the dough, so you will not lose them after the grissini are baked). Cover with a tea towel and let it rest for 40 min.
- 2) Octopus: Clean the octopus under running water to remove any remaining dirt or sand. Remove the mouthpiece with a knife. (Attention: If your octopus is not prepared yet, this is where you need to beat it soft. Asking your seller to prepare it for you beforehand might be worth considering. Alternatively, frozen octopus is also ready to use).
- 3) Boil the cleaned octopus with lemon, onion, garlic and celery (and optional “sad” vegetables) until tender enough to easily pierce with a knife (20-30 min).
- 4) Potatoes: Peel and cut the potatoes.
- 5) Grissini: Preheat the oven to 200°C/392°F. Meanwhile, roll the dough on a flat surface (approx. 0.5 cm thick) and cut it into stripes. Form the dough into the desired shape: Roll and twist for a classic look, or keep the dough flat and use your fingers to make indents. Place the uncooked grissini on a baking sheet/tray. Then, bake until the dough is crisp and golden (approx. 15 min). Put the grissini aside and let cool.
- 6) Octopus: Drain the octopus (if desired, you can collect the broth and use it as soup stock for another day). Cut off the tentacles for grilling (2 per person).
- 7) Potatoes: Boil the potatoes in salted water for approx. 10 minutes. Meanwhile, mix miso, lemon juice and peel, oil/butter and chopped parsley. Drain the potatoes and mix them with the dressing.
Top Tip: Try adding fresh coriander as an alternative to parsley.
- 8) Dressing: Mix all ingredients.
- 9) Octopus: Finally, grill the tentacles in a pan until they are crispy on the outside. Glaze them with some of the Gochujang.
- 10) Plate everything. Consider serving the dressing on the side — this way the Grissini can be dipped in. Enjoy!
Tip-Top Tip: Pretty much every module of the dish can be pre-prepared (especially boiling the octopus and baking the grissini). So, this can be a super quick dish on the day it is served.





RECIPE: _____

Serves: _____ **Time Required:** _____ **Chef:** _____

Ingredients

[illegible]

Directions

[illegible]

Notes



RECIPE: _____

Serves: _____ **Time Required:** _____ **Chef:** _____

Ingredients

[illegible]

Directions

[illegible]

Notes



RECIPE: _____

Serves: _____ **Time Required:** _____ **Chef:** _____

Ingredients

[illegible]

Directions

[illegible]

Notes



RECIPE: _____

Serves: _____ **Time Required:** _____ **Chef:** _____

Ingredients

[illegible]

DIRECTIONS

[illegible]

Notes



RECIPE: _____

Serves: _____ **Time Required:** _____ **Chef:** _____

Ingredients

[illegible]

Directions

[illegible]

Notes



RECIPE:

Serves: _____ **Time Required:** _____ **Chef:** _____

Ingredients

[illegible]

Directions

[illegible]

Notes



RECIPE: _____

Serves: _____ **Time Required:** _____ **Chef:** _____

Ingredients

[illegible]

Directions

[illegible]

Notes



RECIPE: _____

Serves: _____ **Time Required:** _____ **Chef:** _____

Ingredients

[illegible]

Directions

[illegible]

Notes

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RECIPE: _____

Serves: _____ **Time Required:** _____ **Chef:** _____

Ingredients

[illegible]

DIRECTIONS

[illegible]

Notes

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📍 sak-uraharu-no



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RECIPE: _____

Serves: _____ **Time Required:** _____ **Chef:** _____

Ingredients

[illegible]

DIRECTIONS

[illegible]

Notes

Thank you!

Velbekomme!

We hope you enjoyed your stay, and that you'll be back soon! Thank you for your support. Check out the listed names and contact for our incredible artisans. If you enjoyed their work, please consider supporting them! Sayonara!

Love, The Nanami Cookbook Mod Team

Chop IT LIKE IT'S Hot!



A MISHMASH ZINES PRODUCTION



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